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Boss of effects
Richard Edlund on
the effects legacy
of STAR WARS

THE SPECIAL VISUAL EFFECTS OF THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Volume 28 Number 9



CINEFANTASTIQUE



STUART GORDON'S
Space Truckers

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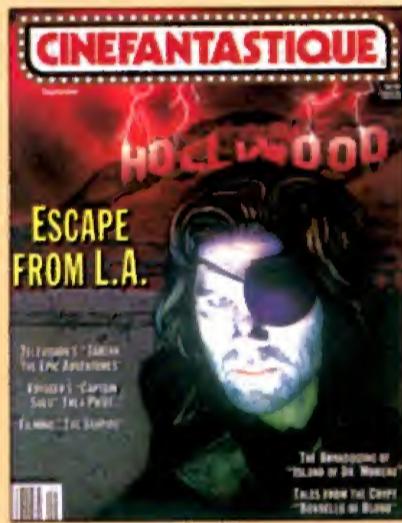
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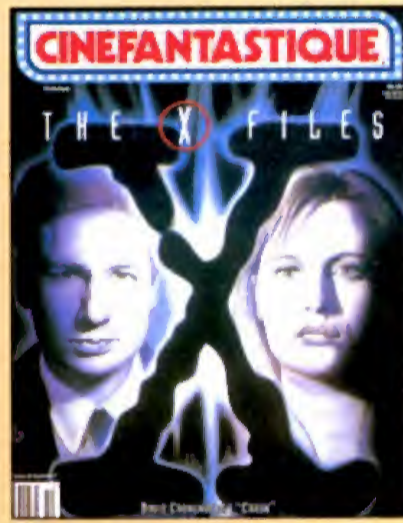
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We go behind the scenes to preview the revised *STAR WARS* and look back at the saga's enduring appeal. **\$8.00**

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"The Magazine with a Sense of Wonder"

MARCH 1997

Now that we're deep into the resurgence of STAR WARS mania, welcome to our cover story on an unsung figure behind the success of the saga, special effects expert Richard Edlund, one of the chief architects of Industrial Light & Magic. Edlund now runs his own effects company in Hollywood, Boss Films, but takes a look back on his Oscar-winning efforts at ILM on STAR WARS, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK and RETURN OF THE JEDI. Also looking back on the effects legacy of STAR WARS are supervisor Dennis Muren, the last of the original team still at ILM, stop-motion expert Phil Tippett and matte artist Harrison Ellenshaw. The ground-breaking effects of STAR WARS made the film a phenomenal success 20 years ago and that success changed the course of movies and special effects, making films like last summer's TWISTER and INDEPENDENCE DAY staples of the industry. The growth and preeminence of special effects has been STAR WARS greatest gift.

But how to explain the resurgence of interest in STAR WARS after 20 years? It's pretty simple, really, and hardly without precedent. STAR TREK enjoyed a resurgence of interest after 20 and even 30 years. There's nothing mysterious about it. Lucasfilm owns the rights to the movies and they've had little success recently producing anything else. The re-release of STAR WARS and its sequels is a calculated move to revive interest in the franchise and promote the filming of THE CLONE WARS, their continuation of the saga, which begins filming in London this Fall. STAR WARS maven George Lucas in that respect isn't really that much different from James Bond film producer Kevin McClory, who ends up remaking THUNDERBALL every 15 years or so. Or Gene Roddenberry, for that matter, who never recaptured the success of STAR TREK until he did it again.

And there's nothing wrong with that. It's good to have you back, George, doing what you do best, directing those sequels that you promised us!

Frederick S. Clarke



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Publisher & Editor: Frederick S. Clarke. **West Coast Editor:** Steve Biodrowski. **Bureaus:** New York/ Dan Persons, Dan Scapperotti. Los Angeles/ Michael Beeler. London/ Alan Jones. **Contributors:** Douglas Eby, Dennis Fischer, Lawrence French, Frank Garcia, Judith Harris, Ben Herndon, Bill Kelley, Gary Kimber, Frederick Szebin, John Thonen, Sue Uram, James Van Hise, Paula Vitaris, Chuck Wagner, Paul Wardle, David Wilt. **Editorial Operations Manager:** Elaine Fiedler. **Editorial Production:** Lisa Tomczak-Walkington, David Bellm. **Publisher's Assistant:** Lisa Coduto. **Circulation:** Reva Patterson. **Business Manager:** Celeste Casey Clarke.

PHOTO CREDITS: Val Adamson (57T); ©BBC (Brian Ritchie 50, 55); ©1996 Kelli Bickman (51-54); ©1994 Cinevox (40-43); Jim Heath (10L, 11, 12B, 13L); ©1996 Lucasfilm Ltd. (16-24, 25T, 25BL, 26-35, 36T, 37-39); ©1996 New Line (N. Israelson 71); Richard Twarog (44-45); Suzanne Tenner (48-49). **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Kelli Bickman, The Burman Studios, Sam Irvin, Stargate Films. **COVER:** Roger Stine

CINEFANTASTIQUE (ISSN 0145-6032) is published monthly at 7240 W. Roosevelt Rd., Forest Park, IL 60130. (708) 366-5566. Second class postage paid at Forest Park, IL 60130 & additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CINEFANTASTIQUE, P.O. Box 270, Oak Park, IL 60303. **Subscriptions:** 12 Issues \$48, 18 issues \$69, 24 Issues \$90. (Foreign & Canada: 12 Issues \$55, 18 issues \$80, 24 Issues \$100.) Single copies: \$8. **Retail Distribution:** In the U.S. by Eastern News Distributors, 250 W. 55th St., New York, NY 10019. (800) 221-3148. In Great Britain by Titan Distributors, P.O. Box 250, London E3 4RT. Phone: (01)980-6167. **Submissions** of artwork and articles are encouraged, but must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Contents copyright ©1997 by Frederick S. Clarke. CINEFANTASTIQUE® is a Registered U.S. Trademark. **PRINTED IN USA.**

EAGERLY AWAITED

ANACONDA (Columbia)

A documentary film crew, on an expedition up the Amazon to find the legendary Shirishama Indians, encounters a dangerous opportunist, Paul Sarone (Jon Voight), stranded on a deserted boat. Though they don't completely trust him, he engenders their friendship with his talents: he comes to the rescue more than once, even saving the life of anthropologist Dr. Steven Cale (Eric Stoltz). With their faith firmly in hand, Sarone leads them along the deadly river with the lure of the Shirishama's whereabouts, though his true mission is to find the gigantic and elusive Anaconda. The documentary's director, Terri Flores (Jennifer Lopez) tries to discern truth from lies, while the crew—cameraman Danny (Ice Cube), soundman Gary (Owen Wilson), his girlfriend and the film's production manager, Denise Kalber (Kari Wuhrer), and the documentary's narrator, Warren Westridge (Jonathan Hyde)—fall prey to Sarone's machinations with their riverboat pilot (Vincent Castellanos). Their expedition becomes a jungle nightmare when the murderous snake surfaces, threatening all of their lives. Luis Llosa (THE SPECIALIST) directs, from a script by Hans Bauer. Responsibility for the mechanical versions of the title character was in the hands of Walt Conti, whose credits include supervising the rattlesnake effects in MAVERICK. Both a 25-foot and a 40-foot version were constructed, which Conti called, "by far the most sophisticated animatronic thing built, basically to replicate the character of a snake, to give it a lot of movement." He added, "Its whole character is movement; it doesn't have facial expressions, per se. The only way to get that motion is with a lot of articulation. The snakes have about 110 joints in them, and the problem then is how to coordinate them all. There's a computer system that controls the joints, and we can preprogram the moves, because we could never get 50 puppeteers trying to coordinate all the joints. The challenge has been getting all the articulation of the snakes so you're able to hold the shots for quite a long time—not just short inserts."

Douglas Eby

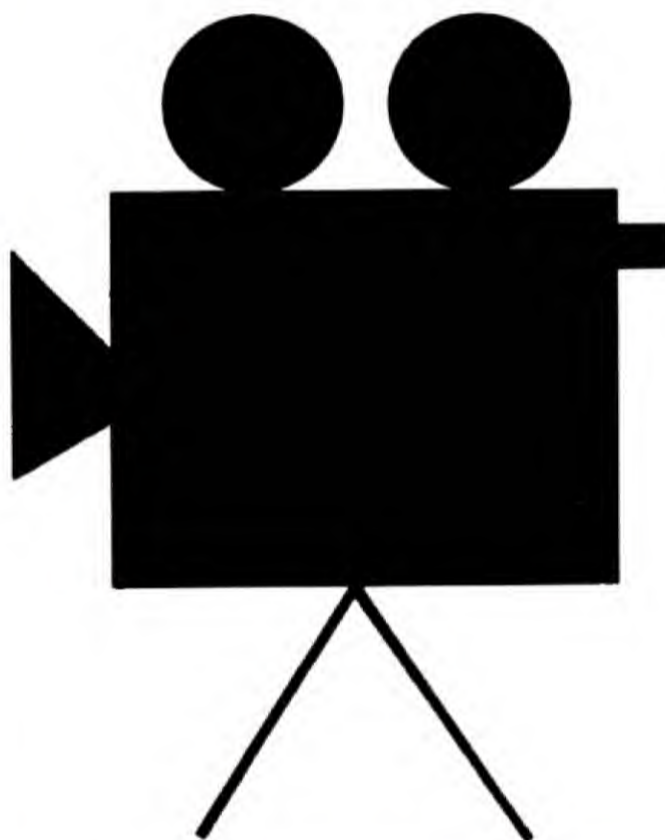
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RELEASE SCHEDULE

Upcoming cinefantastique at a glance, along with a word or two for the discriminating viewer.

compiled by Jay Stevenson
(unless otherwise noted)



THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (Fox) February 21

The second and in some ways the best of the original STAR WARS trilogy returns to the big screen three weeks after the re-release of its progenitor. Despite an Oscar for visual effects (which should have gone to the pristine work in ALTERED STATES), the film had some of the most blatant matte lines ever seen in a multi-million dollar Hollywood production. Let's hope the digital retouching solves this egregious problem. SEE CFQ 28:8

LEXX: ADVENTURES IN THE DARK ZONE (Showtime) July

The cable science fiction mini-series from Canadian producer/director Paul Donovan, starring Malcolm McDowell, previewed in our January issue, failed to air last month as scheduled but has been switched to debut on The Movie Channel in July. SEE CFQ 28:7:8.

LOST HIGHWAY (October) February 21

David Lynch scores a comeback of sorts with a dizzying blend of film noir and surreal antics. The usual Lynchian elements are on display, now so recognizable they are almost self-parody; unlike TWIN PEAKS and WILD AT HEART, however, they are presented without tongue in cheek, putting audiences off balance—uncertain whether or not to laugh. Impossible incidents are accepted with nonchalant indifference. One character metamorphoses into another and launches into a new story that circles back and intersects with the first. Presiding over it all is Robert Blake's "Mystery Man," one of the most uncanny on-screen characterizations in recent memory—a truly unsettling (and at times wickedly funny) personification of irrational forces intruding upon the lives of unwary humans. SEE PAGE 48

RETURN OF THE JEDI (Fox) March 7

This hopelessly inept conclusion to the first STAR WARS trilogy seemed to indicate that the saga had already run out of gas, making it much easier not to be disappointed when THE CLONE WARS didn't roll out three years later in 1986. SEE CFQ 28:8.

TOUCH (MGM) February 7

Paul Schrader (CAT PEOPLE) wrote and directed this film adaptation of Elmore Leonard's novel, about an ex-monk who works as a stigmata-manifesting faith healer in an L.A. rehab center. Skeet Ulrich, Tom Arnold, Christopher Walken, and Bridget Fonda star. SEE CFQ 28:8.

VOLCANO (Fox) February 28

Science goes out the window as a volcano erupts from the La Brea tar pits in Los Angeles. If nothing else, this fanciful notion pushes this disaster film somewhere in to the science-fiction/fantasy category, so it's all right for us to mention it here. Tommy Lee Jones, Don Cheadle, and Keith David star for director Mick Jackson.

CRASH (Fine Line) March 21

Fine Line Pictures has finally settled on a release date for this controversial film from writer-director David Cronenberg, based on the novel by J.G. Ballard. Said the novelist of his inspiration for the book: "The car crash occupies a huge place in the public imagination, particularly among filmgoers and television viewers; it's almost impossible to see a film these days without a car crash. Now why? What is it about the car crash that so touches a vital part of human experience?" Cronenberg attempts to give some answers in the film, explaining his interest in the source material by stating, "The book is unrelenting. It's as obsessive as the people in it are obsessive, and their responses to everything are not nearly what you would consider normal. But they're not abnormal either....It's just very disturbing on that level." James Spader, Holly Hunter, Elias Koteas, Deborah Unger, and Rosanna Arquette star. SEE CFQ 28:3

DANTE'S PEAK (Universal) February 7

In this race to see which would erupt first, Universal leapt ahead by starting production on DANTE'S PEAK before Fox got their rival production, VOLCANO, in front of the cameras. Things seemed to change, however, when VOLCANO wrapped first and announced a February 28 release date, one week before DANTE'S PEAK. Then Universal pulled a switcheroo, pushing their film up by a month, leaving their rival helpless: the only way to beat DANTE'S PEAK into theatres would be to move VOLCANO up to January 31, which would have conflicted with Fox's release of STAR WARS; of course, being eager to win the rights to the next STAR WARS trilogy, Fox wasn't about to do anything that even might tick-off George Lucas. A roster of genre names highlight this disaster epic: actress Linda Hamilton reteams with her TERMINATOR producer Gale Anne Hurd; Pierce Brosnan (MARS ATTACKS) co-stars, and Roger Donaldson (SPECIES) directs.



SPACE CADET

GATTACA (Columbia)

Columbia postponed their announced March 28 release until Fall for this feature film debut for director Andrew Niccol, who also scripted. Ethan Hawke, Uma Thurman, Alan Arkin, Gore Vidal, and Ernest Borgnine star in this science-fiction drama produced by Danny DeVito, Michael Shamberg, and Stacey Sher. The film portrays a society of genetically engineered people, in which Jerome (Hawke), a natural birth or "in-valid," assumes the identity of a member of the genetic elite to pursue his goal of traveling into space with the Gattaca Aerospace Corporation. However, a week before his flight, a Gattaca mission director is murdered and Jerome is a suspect. With a relentless investigator in pursuit and the colleague he has fallen in love with (Uma Thurman) beginning to suspect him, Jerome is finally forced to confront his true self.

Fall

HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC

THE HUNGER

Ridley and Tony Scott team up for a TV horror anthology on Showtime.

by Alan Jones

Ridley and Tony Scott mark their official entrance into television series production with *THE HUNGER*, a sophisticated adult horror series which premieres on the Showtime channel in March. The first three episodes (made under the banner of Scott Free, Telescene Communications, and Showtime Networks, Inc.) will be combined into a trilogy, providing the series with a spectacular start and also a theatrical feature for the rest of the world. In conjunction with Jeff Fazio, a writer who brought the original concept to the Scott brothers' attention three years ago, they have developed the 19-episode series to provide a showcase for upcoming filmmakers.

The series began principal photography in Central London on November 1, with the first installment, "Menage A Trois," based on a short story by F. Paul Wilson, directed by Jake Scott, Ridley's son. The second segment, Tony Scott's "The Swords," was also shot in London, but the third segment, Russell Mulcahy's "Necros," was filmed on location in Montreal at the request of the Canadian backers, Telescene.

"Menage A Trois" stars Karen Black as Miss Gati, a deformed, wheelchair-bound woman who transfers her soul into the body of her young nurse to seduce her attractive gardener. It marks the first dramatic piece helmed by Jake Scott, who made a name for himself as a rock video director for such groups as Oasis, Smashing Pumpkins, The Cranberries, The Rolling Stones, and Tina Turner; he also has more than fifty commercials to his credit. Scott, who looks exactly like a younger version of his father, got involved in the project when his uncle outlined the concept and asked if he would be interested. "I began to look at the stories on offer—we were given a choice of five each—and chose this one, because it was the simplest in



Karen Black (in *CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT*) stars in the pilot as a deformed woman who transfers her soul into the body of a younger woman.

terms of relationships," said Jake. "Nor did it entirely rely on any supernatural elements."

Of course, *THE HUNGER* was also the title of Tony Scott's 1983 debut feature, an erotic vampire tale based on Whitley Strieber's novel. "Initially, the TV series was all vampire tales," explained Jake, "but the producers broadened the concept out to give more story scope. Now it can be the hunger for

sex, eternal life, money, success, and other Mephistophelean things. It's hunger in general, as will be explained by a host in the wrap-around sections, who introduces each story and then metamorphoses into that story's leading character. Miss Gati is essentially a vampire, I suppose, although she sucks people's souls rather than their blood."

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Short Notes

The very weekend that his most recent film, *SLEEPERS*, was becoming number one at the box office, director **Barry Levinson** put development of *SPHERE* on hiatus. The project was not sunk, however, but merely regrouping in an effort to achieve the lavish special effects on budget. Star **Dustin Hoffman** turned down another acting offer (from **Steven Spielberg**) in order to stay on board the film, which is based on Michael Crichton's novel. ☹ According to a report in *Daily Variety*, *DEVIL'S ADVOCATE* is having a "devil of a time" on-set. Production reportedly fell behind schedule during the first week, with a resulting rise in tempers. **Taylor Hackford** is directing **Al Pacino** and **Keanu Reeves** in the Faustian tale. ☹ Screenwriter **Philip Eisner**, whose *EVEN HORIZON* just went into production [see Production Starts, at right] has his next deal in place: *NECRONAUTS*. Based on a story by Terry Bisson that was published in *Playboy*, the film will detail the adventures of the titular characters, who travel into "life-after-death space to chart a new territory." □

OUTER LIMITS REUNION

by Frank Garcia

According to exec. producers Jonathan Glassner and Pen Densham, a special episode of *THE OUTER LIMITS* is being prepared for shooting this spring. Joseph Stefano, the writer-producer who gave us the black-and-white series, has been recruited to script a third season remake of his own 1963 episode "A Feasibility Study." It is the producers' intention to cast the episode with actors who appeared in the original series. No one is saying who among the many guest stars from the original will be approached for this reunion episode. Work on the script by Stefano is still in progress, and the potential is certainly exciting. Among the actors eligible are Robert Culp, Martin Landau, Robert Duvall, David McCallum, Dabney Coleman, Cliff Robertson, Martin Sheen, and Bruce Dern—not to mention such future *STAR TREK* actors as William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, James Doohan, Grace Lee Whitney, and Sally Kellerman, to name a few. □

Production Starts

ALIEN: RESURRECTION

If nothing else, the film certainly will not fail to justify its title: Sigourney Weaver returns as Ripley in this attempt to resurrect a franchise badly damaged in its last outing. Jean-Pierre Jeunet (*CITY OF LOST CHILDREN*) directs Winona Ryder and Ron Perlman in a script by Joss Whedon.

EVENT HORIZON

Paul Anderson directs his follow-up to his surprisingly successful debut, *MORTAL KOMBAT*—a science-fiction effort scripted by Philip Eisner. Laurence Fishburne, Sam Neill, Kathleen Quinlan, and Joely Richardson star.

FLUBBER

Robin Williams stars for producer John Hughes in this remake of *THE ABSENT-MINDED PROFESSOR*. This is Hughes third attempt at redoing a well-known family favorite (the first two were *MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET* and *101 DALMATIANS*)—maybe he intends to keep trying until he gets it right?

SPACE CADET

This family comedy from Walt Disney features Harland Williams, Jessica Lundy, William Sadler, Beau Bridges, and Shelley Duvall. Stuart Gillard directs.

WHEN TIME EXPIRES

Mark Hamill returns to the genre that made him famous.

by Chuck Wagner

"Chaos and chance are words to describe phenomena of which we are ignorant."

—Sven C. Carlson

Chaos theory is an important element in *WHEN TIME EXPIRES*, set to air on Showtime early this year. In the film, an emissary from the future (Richard Grieco, of 21 *JUMP STREET*) comes to Earth to perform a most mundane act: inserting a quarter into a parking meter in a tiny Texas town. If he fails in this seemingly innocuous task, the Earth may be doomed by a series of Rube Goldberg-style interactions which have been tracked by a future-based organization called the Ministry of Future Analysis. As is said by students of Chaos, "When butterflies flap their wings in China, there may be a hurricane elsewhere...."

Directed by first-timer David Bourla, working from his own script, the film was shot on location in Los Angeles (standing in for the Lone Star state). Also starring are Cynthia Geary (Shelly on *NORTHERN EXPOSURE*) and Chad Everett (TV's *MEDICAL CENTER*). But of most interest to genre fans is the presence of Mark Hamill, known to a generation of fans for playing Luke Skywalker—a role currently being introduced to a whole new generation, courtesy of the re-release of the *STAR WARS* trilogy.

In *WHEN TIME EXPIRES*, Hamill returns to a genre which has made him famous. "I love my role in



Time traveller Richard Grieco uses a force field to defend himself from attacks by Tim Thomerson (above). Grieco with fellow traveller Mark Hamill (left) locate the artifact that shapes the destiny of time to come.



this picture, because it's enigmatic," Hamill said. "The whole thing struck me as a very interesting, almost *TWILIGHT ZONE*-like story." Hamill plays Bill Theriot, a time-traveler and friend to the main character. Hamill was also a favorite of David Bourla. "I like the character because he's not exactly what he seems." Hamill added with a sheepish grin, "It's always flattering when they think of you, rather than your struggling to get the part against

other actors. There's a great energy in this company, and Richard's great. I'm having a good time."

Speculation about time is at the heart of *WHEN TIME EXPIRES*. "That's what I love about this movie," Hamill agreed. "It engages the audience more. It's not just a roller coaster."

Looking at Hamill—married with three children, ages 17, 13, and 8—is itself a little like being in a time warp: he seems to have hardly aged since *STAR WARS*. "My kids run me ragged, so that's where I get my exercise—I don't have a real regimen," the actor said. "Also, I don't agree that I haven't aged. It's like when people say to me, 'I can't believe you haven't seen *STAR WARS* since it first came out.' I say, 'You ever look at your old high school yearbook? Ewww. How could I ever leave the house with my hair looking like that?!'"

If there's anything *WHEN TIME EXPIRES* can teach, it's that Chaos and Time can conspire to make for an explosive and hard-to-predict future. If events suggested in the film are true, the fate of the Earth could hang in the balance on whether or not the parking meter in tiny Lanston, Texas, gets fed in time.

Can the Earth be saved? Time will tell. □

Obituaries

by Sue Uram

Mark Lenard

On November 22, the beloved character actor died in New York of Multiple Myeloma at age 68. Mark Lenard played various roles in the *STAR TREK* series and features: the Romulan commander in the original *TREK* episode "Balance of Terror;" Sarek, Spock's father, in "Journey to Babel;" and a Klingon in *STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE*. He was best remembered for the continuing role of Sarek, who reappeared in the third and fourth *TREK* features and in two episodes of *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*.

Lenard had never intended to be an actor but happened to be waiting for a friend who was auditioning and was cast for the part. From there he went on to roles on Broadway, television, and movies. He was seen on the big screen in *THE GREATEST STORY EVERY TOLD*, *HANG 'EM HIGH*, *ANNIE HALL*, *THE RADICAL*, *OUTRAGE*, and *NOON SUNDAY*. His numerous TV appearances include *MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE*, *BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY*, *THE INCREDIBLE HULK*, and *THE WILD, WILD WEST*. He also appeared with Sir Laurence Olivier in *THE POWER AND THE GLORY*. Lenard's most recent work can be seen not only in the *TREK* films and series but as a guest star on *IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT*. His last stage project, *The Boys of Autumn*, was done with co-actor and friend Walter Keonig. He narrated two documentaries for the Discover Channel, *THE INFINITE VOYAGE* and *AMAZING SPACE*.

As a convention guest star, Lenard always made time for his fans and never refused to sign an autograph. He will be remembered as a fine actor and a wonderful human being by all who knew him. □

THE SCOTTS' HUNGER

continued from previous page

Obviously, *THE HUNGER* series is being made in response to numerous fantasy-based shows currently vying for network and cable air time. *THE X-FILES* and *TALES FROM THE CRYPT* have clearly established a trend that others want to follow for equally successful ratings. Jake said, "I think there's an upswing in fantasy television because there's a lot more we can do technically now to tell those kinds of stories properly. The police drama is exhausted. So is the medical, murder-mystery, and 'Disease of the Week' drama. Fantasy was the one area that hadn't been explored, updated, humanized or sufficiently reinvented until *THE X-FILES* came along. Now, you can do anything you want: humorous, dark, funny, or sexy. *THE HUNGER* is more erotic than most, but we're not dealing in softcore pornography with high heels, suspenders, or chains. It's more strongly abstract than that." □

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SPAWN

Superhero from Hell coming to big screen.

By James Van Hise

Summer movies are already jockeying for position. Vying for audience attention next to the likes of *BATMAN AND ROBIN* is *SPAWN*, a motion picture based on the most popular comic book in the United States. The movie is based on the best seller created and drawn by Todd McFarlane, with a story adapted by Mark Dippe and Alan McElroy, with a screenplay by McElroy.

The New Line Cinema project is being directed by Dippe on locations in and around Los Angeles. Dippe previously worked as a visual effects supervisor for Lucasfilm's Industrial Light & Magic on such films as *THE ABYSS*, *TERMINATOR 2*, *THE FLINTSTONES*, *JURASSIC PARK* and *CONGO*. Clint

The movie is based on Todd McFarlane's *Spawn* comic book, the best-selling title in the comics industry.

Goldman, the producer of *SPAWN*, was a senior producer at ILM where he received an Academy Award nomination for *THE MASK*. Steve "Spaz" Williams is the film's animation director who also formerly worked at ILM. Pooling their talents and experience, the three friends decided to get together to make films on their own.

The movie stars Michael Jai White (who was recently seen as *TYSON* in the HBO telefilm) as Al Simmons, the U.S. Government assassin who is double-crossed by his boss, played by Martin Sheen. Simmons dies, only to return from Hell five years later to lead an army from the underworld against humanity, but first he must kill his former employer. One of the agents of Hell, called Clown, is played by John Leguizamo. Clown has the disquieting ability to morph into the 12-foot terror known as *The Violator* (of which a full-scale version has been built for the movie's two principal slug-fests). Theresa Randle plays Wanda, the woman Simmons was going to marry, and D.B. Sweeney plays Terry, a fellow operative and former best friend.

Spawn is the name of the character Simmons becomes, and his "costume" is actually a kind of living body armor which responds to *Spawn*'s thoughts. The film is a cross between an espionage movie and a weird super hero outing.

ILM is one of the effects companies working on the film and Christian Kubsch is the liaison between ILM and the *SPAWN* production company for the 70 CGI shots they have been called



Michael Jai White stars as *Spawn*, a trained government assassin, back from the dead. His shape-changing body-armor transforms him into a lethal weapon.

on to do. These include the clown to *Violator* transformations, when *Spawn* is flying and other extraordinary scenes.

Creature and makeup effects are being done by the K.N.B. Efx Group (Bob Kurtzman, Greg Nicatero & Howard Berger). "They also built the *Spawn* costume and its various head configurations and makeup," said producer Clint Goldman, "as well as all of *Spawn*'s various accessories: chains, spiked fists, and the clown costume that John Leguizamo is wearing," which consists of a fat suit with a prosthetic belly and prosthetic face.

Comic creator Todd McFarlane consulted on both the script and the production designs, and

flew down to L.A. from his home in Washington state to visit the filming every other week. The filmmakers credit McFarlane's support with enabling the project to come together. Noted producer Clint Goldman, "Todd was willing to trust new people to work on the movie, and I give Todd a lot of credit for having faith in people who don't have a lot of film credits attached to their names to put the movie together, which is in keeping with who Todd is. Todd is a maverick in his own right, having broken away from Marvel to start his own comic book company."

The film is tentatively slated for September release. □



20,000 Leagues UNDER THE Sea

Verne's classic tale updated for CBS.

By Frederick Szabin

Living in the midst of the 19th century's Industrial and Scientific Revolutions, author Jules Verne easily found unlimited inspiration for his timeless flights of fancy and inadvertently created a literary genre that would eventually become known as science fiction.

From his beloved Nantes, France, the author spent FIVE

Sophie (Julie Cox) explores the deep, locked inside a 19th century version of a diving suit.



WEEKS IN A BALLOON (1826), took a JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH (1864), travelled FROM THE EARTH TO THE MOON (1865), went AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS (1872) and explored 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA (1870). Verne's works have proved so timeless that motion pictures have adapted his novels throughout the 20th century. This year will see two televised re-creations of Verne's 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA, the first airing on CBS in February starring Ben Cross as Captain Nemo, with Richard Crenna as Professor Aronnax.

Verne's novel has been filmed before in three vastly different incarnations in 1916, 1929 and 1954, the latter Disney film proving the most durable. It is not only this classic version that the CBS two-hour film has to go against, but also an updated four-hour miniseries being produced by ABC for airing in May.

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS producer Robert Halmi Sr. handed the CBS telefilm to Verne veteran Michael Ander-



Nemo (Ben Cross) on the bow of the Nautilus. This take on Verne's legendary submarine uses 19th century technologies, with a 20th century approach.

son, whose AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS garnered 10 Oscar nominations, winning five, including Best Picture in 1956. This time, Anderson worked with a script by Joe Wiesenfeld (THE YEARLING) which promises to be faithful to the novel, but not fearful of taking different turns from Verne's famous tome.

Academy Award-winning production designer Brian Ackland-Snow (A ROOM WITH A VIEW) and special effects supervisor Tom Harris offer contemporary viewers a look at the future from a 19th century sensibility with designs and effects that promise to breathe life into the author's world-spanning literary adventure.

"It was quite a challenge to make this film because you're dealing with an imaginary world from a man with a great imagination," said Anderson, whose previous science fiction credits include LOGAN'S RUN and MILLENNIUM. "I had to go back to Verne's original intentions in order to recreate what he had in mind. He had this extraordinary facility of putting people together who

were divided in the outside world and who come together in a character conflict.

Anderson was brought on the project last March after Wiesenfeld had written a first draft. The two then worked together to develop the narrative in terms of budget and characterization. As with any remake, a director must face inevitable comparisons with his film's predecessor, particularly when remaking a film as fondly remembered as Disney's version,

Captain Nemo (Ben Cross) and Sophie (Julie Cox) dine under the sea.



DIRECTOR MICHAEL ANDERSON

“We looked at submarine designs and found one of almost the 21st century, that hasn’t even been built yet. It looked so much like the one in Verne’s story that it was almost uncanny.”



Faithful to the original, most of the characters remain intact in this version. Inset: Richard Crenna as Professor Aronnax.



which starred Kirk Douglas, Paul Lukas, Peter Lorre and the inimitable James Mason as Nemo. Besides Cross and Crenna, Anderson cast DUE SOUTH’s Paul Gross as harpooner Ned Land. In place of Aronnax’s assistant Conseil is the Professor’s daughter Sophie, portrayed by Julie Cox, who disguises herself as a boy to accompany her father on his quest for the reason behind the sinking of ships, leading to a romance with Nemo.

Cox’s character replaces Conseil, the Professor’s assistant in Verne’s story.



The director read both the English and French printings of Verne’s novel to get a full sense of the author’s intentions. “I wanted to see the nuances,” said Anderson. “Actually, the English translation I read—which is very, very long with many footnotes—is very close to the original. I also came across a comic book version from the 1940s. There was one point in the story when they had to get out of the submarine when it was not in water. In this comic book I saw that they used a sketch of a steel ladder that came down to the belly of the submarine, so I actually stole that from somebody else’s imagination and put it in the film!” Anderson laughed.

The picture was shot at England’s enormous Pinewood Studio from July 22 to August 30 last year, with additional underwater sequences filmed in the Red Sea. CGI, miniatures, real sea life and full-sized sections of submarine were melded with Ackland-Snow’s designs, one of the most important of which is Captain Nemo’s avenging juggernaut, the Nautilus.

“Brian did a brilliant job,” said Anderson of Ackland-

Snow. “He designed something that at the same time was functional in terms of Jules Verne’s story, and could resemble either a sea monster, a whale, or could be mistaken for such things by other people. It doesn’t look like a submarine as we know it, and yet I wanted something that you believed could go under water and do the things it did, such as spouting water like a whale to discharge foul air and waste. It was very complex to figure out the sub’s various functions using 19th century technology with a 20th century approach, but it was tremendous fun.

“I read the novel several times for inspiration,” Anderson continued. “We looked at submarine designs and found one of almost the 21st century which hasn’t even been built yet, but looked so much like the submarine in Verne’s story that it was almost uncanny that Verne had thought of this shape. We based our design on that with a combination of past and future ideas.”

Anderson and Wiesenfeld went through the process of deciding what scenes should and shouldn’t be included from Verne’s novel, while being careful not to lose too much. The claustrophobic scene of the Nautilus being trapped in ice was dismissed as too expensive, but the story’s underwater diving was retained with cast members being literally locked into 19th century versions of deep sea diving suits.

A set piece of the novel—and a show-stopper in the Disney film—was the Nautilus and its crew fighting off a deadly squid. Anderson’s film dismisses the squid in favor of a “proto-leviathan,”—a creature of immense age living at a great depth—thought at the beginning of the story to be responsi-

ble for the ship attacks Aronnax and his daughter go to investigate. Massive sets—including a view of the monster’s innards when it tries to swallow the Nautilus—were achieved with miniatures and CGI.

What could have been perceived as a monkey wrench thrown into the works of Anderson’s film, namely another version of the same story being simultaneously filmed by ABC with Michael Caine as Nemo, was apparently shrugged off by the director as he toiled away in England while TIME TRAX producer Jeffery Hayes oversaw Caine, Patrick Dempsey, Bryan Brown and Mia Sara in Australia.

“I heard about it a little while after I started on the project,” said Anderson. “It didn’t affect my film at all. Once you’re engaged in a project you do *your*

continued on page 62

Cox and Cross take a turn on deck. Unlike the book, this story includes elements of romance.



WARRIOR

A kid in a

By James Van Hise

March will see the release of the modestly budgeted science fiction adventure **THE WARRIOR OF WAVERLY STREET**, directed by Manny Coto, who also wrote the screenplay. The Trimark film stars Joseph Mazello (**JURASSIC PARK**, **RADIO FLYER**) as 12-year-old Spencer, a boy who finds an alien Cybersuit.

"It looks like a six-foot-tall man with a weird face, but you can go inside it," the young actor explained. Spencer is a shy



Above: The warrior, an alien Cybersuit found by a 12-year-old boy, design by special effects supervisor Tom Burman. Below: The boy's climactic battle with the Brood Warrior. Right: Director Manny Coto observes a test of the Cybersuit, Indiglow eyes devised by John Criswell. Coto's inspiration were the juvenile science fiction tales of Robert A. Heinlein.



boy who is afraid to approach a girl he likes, plus he has been plagued by a neighborhood bully, but his experience with the Cybersuit gives him a new self-confidence. Spencer must join with the cybersuit in order to defend the Earth from a deadly alien called the Brood Warrior.

Producer Jennie Lew Tugend (who produced **LETHAL**



OF WAVERLY STREET

Cybersuit defends the planet from aliens.

WEAPON & FREE WILLIE) knew director Manny Coto's work from TALES FROM THE CRYPT, which she co-produced for three years. The pre-production period on the project began in November 1994. Filming began in October 1995 and lasted for 47 days. Noted Tugend, "We realized that the movie hung on all of the visual effects, and that unless we were going to make them unique and special, there'd really be no reason to make this movie because there's been movies about robots, and certainly movies about kids and aliens. So we needed to bring something unique to it."

The special "look" the film needed came from Tom and Bari Burman of the Burman Studios. "They came in with wonderful drawings of a cybersuit," said Tugend, "and a year later the cybersuit we're filming looks very close to their original vision."

The Burmans' designs envisioned the cybersuit as something more human and organic, and less robotic. "We referred to it as the gentle giant," said Tugend, "and from that moment on the story became more whimsical than robotic."

Though 90% of the Burmans' film work has been on higher budget, major studio productions, Tom and Bari Burman loved THE WARRIOR OF WAVERLY STREET concept from the very beginning, and the enthusiasm and team attitude of the filmmakers involved. The Burman Studio was originally contacted about working on the project even before the film had all of its backing in place, and the Burmans felt that this modestly-budgeted project could result in magical family entertainment. As Tom Burman recalled, "When I first read THE WARRIOR OF WA-

"The tendency was to make a Robocop. I got a more humanistic, biomechanical feel," remarked Tom Burman. "I thought of Boris Karloff's Frankenstein monster."



JURASSIC PARK's Joseph Mazello plays Spencer, a timid boy whose discovery of the Cybersuit leads to self-discovery and adventure.

VERLY STREET, I told Bari, 'This is a project I really want to do.' I loved the whole idea of a kid whose life is not working—picked on at school, his mother recently dead, his sister harasses him and his father ignores him. He finds the cybersuit in a junkyard; it entraps him inside. At first he is disoriented and frightened. He now has the power to do almost anything he wants, like possibly pummel the bully from his school, but retribution is not in his heart. Meanwhile, the evil brood warrior creature has come to Earth to claim the cybersuit.

"Bari and I had known [producer] Jenny Lew [Tugend] since GOONIES and SCROOGED—for which we were nominated for an Oscar—

and were excited about the possibilities of working for her first solo producing venture," Burman continued. "She asked us to come up with a rendition of the cybersuit. The tendency, if one was to interpret the screenplay's description, was to make a ROBOCOP-type suit design, but I got another image: more humanistic, biomechanical feel, something Spencer, as well as the audience, could relate to. Spencer has a running conversation with this suit he is driving and they learn from each other. Sometimes it's touching; I thought of Boris Karloff's Frankenstein monster, Lenny, even Mighty Joe Young—those characters I have always loved.

"Manny Coto and I connected immediately. He saw new

possibilities within his film. He was excited about doing rewrites to accommodate our new vision. Trimark also approved, but had not greenlighted the picture yet. This was contingent upon European pre-sales. So we set about helping make this a go project. First there was the American Film Market. I was out of town, so Bari and our rep, Stu Needman, were present with the top Trimark executives. They helped Trimark with a game plan and helped give the project added validity by showing pictures and artwork from our studio's 25-year history. We then sculpted and molded an 18" maquette of the cybersuit and a 6" maquette of a Trelkin for the Cannes Film Festival. We also sent artwork of our work intended for this film. With Manny Coto's enthusiasm and our history, as well as visual aids, the film pre-sold and was greenlighted."

The film is aimed at general audiences. Producer Tugend feels that the term "family film" is one which has been overused and is often applied to films which are on the bland side. "It's a whimsical movie that I think should be geared for 9- to 14-year-olds," she said. "It'll have great action. Really unique creatures. Good battle sequences. It'll capture the imagination of the younger kids because it's a fantasy fulfillment, that a kid could get inside of a suit and become an action hero and save the world."

Director Manny Coto's name may be familiar from other projects he's worked on, including his famous script for the yet unfilmed action thriller THE TICKING MAN (co-written with Brian Helgeland). THE TICKING MAN was originally sold for \$1.2 million with Bruce



Top: A Trelkin, one of the alien creators of the Cybersuit, creature effects by the Burman Studio. Left: The Burmans' early design after reading the script.



Willis attached as the star, but when Willis made *THE LAST BOY SCOUT* instead, the script was sidetracked and it will need a major action star to topline the project before it is revived. Coto also directed *DR. GIGGLES* and was recently the co-executive producer of *THE OUTER LIMITS* for its first season. He left that series in order to direct *THE WARRIOR OF WAVERLY STREET*.

Describing his approach to the film, Coto noted, "I tried not to make a kids movie, but a movie that kids would want to go see. But it's not a movie that sugarcoats the action. It's done with a lot of humor and a lot of fun, but at the same time I think that for any story to be involving, there has to be a real sense of menace, and I think that's what will give it a 'PG' rating."

Coto went to Cannes in May 1995, pitching the film to foreign buyers when one of them turned to his friend and remarked, "Ah, it's *THE MASK* meets *E.T.*"

"I don't know if that's an ac-

curate description, Coto observed, "but that's what stuck with all the foreign buyers, and I think that's about as good as any description. But in reality the idea of a boy inside a cybersuit comes from, if anything, Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*. I was always taken by the battle armor. I always found those absolutely fascinating, and I got the notion that what if one of these things were actually a personality, and not just a suit. Then I worked backwards into who would build these suits and how one came to Earth and I gradually got to the aliens. Since I wanted to make it a kid's movie, I figured that the aliens had to be short so that they would coincidentally be the same size as a 12-year-old kid.

"I would really say that the story more resembles a Heinlein juvenile story than anything else. They're filled with the classic 'sense of wonder' that's missing in a lot of science fiction literature today. I'd love to see someone actually film some of them. I adore them. But this is my take on them. There's a lot of really fun stuff in the movie, especially given the budget. There's a lot of very clever designs and I'm very proud of it and I really feel a sense of pride because it's something I would want to go see."

The major fight scene in the film between the cybersuit warrior and the Brood Warrior was filmed in an actual junk yard. "The junk yard fight was quite

"The idea comes from Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*," said director Manny Coto. "I got the notion, what if the battle armor were a personality, and not just a suit"

interesting," said Coto. "Shooting the fight was a logistical nightmare because we only had two weeks to shoot this entire sequence and in-between certain parts of the fight there were major stunts which took almost half a day to rig and set up. We had to stack our own cars and design a set in a method so that we could shoot on one part of the set while a stunt was being rigged on the other. All of the fight in the end was built of very small sections and my part was keeping it all together in place, because oftentimes there were three units filming three different scenes."

Coto chose to film the fight effects live. "We had cranes stationed around this set at various places," said Coto. "Sometimes they were lifting cars and sometimes they were lifting stunt people who were flying through the air. We stacked seven cars and then filmed them all collapsing on top of the Brood Warrior, which took about a day to do and then a day to clean up. When the Brood Warrior blasts out of this stack of cars, we used a gigantic rig with two cars welded to hydraulic jacks. Air-cannon blasts underneath them blew the cars into the air as the Brood Warrior flew out from beneath. Those two stunts took

three days and were done by a second unit."

Coto wanted a fight choreography that was not like martial arts, with constant hits, flying back and doing flips and such. He wanted something that was more akin to an old Marvel comic, such as where the Sub Mariner battled the Incredible Hulk and every punch caused ripples in the Earth. "I loved the superhero, super-powered battles, which you don't see much of. What would really happen if something that strong slugged something else as strong, and what would be the repercussions?"

"In this case when the cybersuit punches the Brood Warrior he goes flying back and smashes into a station wagon, which completely collapses all around him. And this stunt took a day to rig as well. We did it all full-size. We didn't do any miniatures. The car was rigged to collapse, and it was done by attaching cables inside the car and securing the car against a stack of automobiles on the other side. A tractor sped away pulling the cables and collapsing the car from the inside at the same time that a Brood Warrior dummy was yanked into the cars." In this way Coto was able to achieve the effect that these

Filming the climactic battle in an auto junkyard as the Brood Warrior is sent crashing into a car, filmed live, with the car rigged to collapse around the suit.



are two titanic beings and every punch they throw knocks them across the auto-wrecking yard into another catastrophe.

The story takes place all in one night and the extensive night filming was done in an actual South Pasadena neighborhood as well as the legendary Bronson Caves and other locations around Los Angeles county. On some of these locations the non-union production was plagued with protesters from the guilds. While these protesters were legally limited to standing around and glaring because they were prohibited by court order from actually disrupting filming, a couple of crew members who had been working on the film were actually convinced to join the union picket line, which also caused some hard feelings.

"It was a bad situation for all involved," said the director. "When the strike first hit I was basically directing a movie where ten yards away from me there was a line of people screaming obscenities, in-between takes—talk about demoralizing. It's kind of hard to work when you hear someone in the background yelling 'You stink!' But somehow we got through it. I'd never encountered that before and I think they just decided to make us an example because there are less tumultuous methods to organize, but for some reason on our show they just decided to throw up a picket line."

The Burmans had to make a number of cybersuits due to the inevitable attrition which occurs on props during the making of a motion picture, as well as building specific suits for specific purposes, such as more durable ones to use in stunts.

"We tried to maintain pristine suits for when the principal character is shot in close-up. So as one got a little tattered, it became more for a stunt or background shot and we saved each new pristine suit for a close-up," said Burman. "It was made



Above: Boy turned Superhero. Right: Cybersuit actor Alex Daniels, sans helmet in a makeup test. Several suits were used to maintain a pristine look.

from a lot of things. It utilized foam latex and polyurethane elastimers. It was built over a body cast of Alex Daniels."

Stuntman Alex Daniels wore the cybersuit throughout filming. "We had our special stunt suits that were set up for doing specific stunts, and then we had to jump back and forth from a perfect suit to a suit that we could use for that kind of action. We also needed a suit in a damaged form, so we had to take one of our good suits and progressively damage it.

"The cybersuit's helmet was carbon fiber epoxy, and its face was foam latex with multiple radio-controlled servos giving it life," continued Burman. "With an unrealistic shooting schedule and the cybersuits working every day (with sometimes three units going on at the same time) it became an incredible challenge maintaining the suits to look pristine. Several suits were used during the shoot, with the tattered suits becoming stunt suits backing up the stunt suits made just for stunts."

John Criswell came up with a technique to make the suit's eyes glow. "The problem of making the eyes glow was twofold," said Burman. "There was no other place for the actor inside to see out of, and any conventional light source gave away how it was done. John came up with Indiglow, like that used in Timex watches. It looked great, but Manny wanted it to brighten and dim on cue. No one had done this before, so John



contacted the manufacturer of Indiglow and they made a prototype variac system. John was able to duplicate the system for back-up parts and we were almost on our way. One problem: The Indiglow would burn out for no apparent reason. Finally we realized it was the moisture in the helmet that shorted them out, so once we dealt with that we were okay."

As with his concept for the cybersuit, the Broad Warrior also took on a life of its own. "For me, he became every kid's

nightmare, a writhing mass of living weapons," said Burman. "You got the feeling that if you broke off a piece of him that another piece would just grow on its own and maybe become another Brood Warrior.

"Manny [Coto] and I never liked any of the ideas for eyes. Then he said, 'How about no eyes?' 'Too cool.' He has ears where he looks like he should have eyes. These ears could move as the warrior listened and honed in on your movements. If you stopped moving he could hear your breathing. If you stopped breathing, he could hear your heartbeat. He has tentacles that shoot out from his chest and wrap around you, pulling you back into his crab-like claws and snapping jaws. The spines on his head rattle like a snake's, warning of his presence, and like a bull he snorts and steams, posturing for battle. He also glows in the dark. Standing almost eight feet, like some kind of desert crustacean with spines, he looks truly menacing.

"The whole suit was pieced together over two undersuits made from Lycra," said Burman. "A harness was made from a backpack to place a fully articulated neck and animatronic head well above its wearer. We used fluorescent invisible paint over our color scheme so we could film him with ultravi-

The Burman's oversize shell of the Cybersuit helmet, used to film Mazello's interior point of view.



"The Brood Warrior took on a life of his own," said Burman. "For me, he became every kid's nightmare, a writhing mass of living weapons."



Creature effects designer and supervisor Tom Burman with the Cybersuit opened-up on set, ready for entry of Alex Daniels and filming.

olet light."

While the Burmans designed and built the Cybersuit, it still required some post-production visual effects to cover the opening and closing of the suit when the boy enters and exits it. "This was always planned," said visual effects supervisor Tom Ranone. "When the boy looks inside the suit they had some basic fiber-optics to give an ethereal quality that'll definitely be enhanced optically, but the fiber-optics provided will generate a good quality basis for that." Ranone coordinated a group of visual effects companies to produce CGI and optical effects for the film, including Computer Cafe, Digital Film Works and Area 51.

One of the script's creative effects, the Tracker, almost didn't make it into the film. The concept was actually inspired by Tom Burman's designs for the Brood Warrior. "As we invented, designed and sketched our ideas, Manny became more exuberant, inspiring more rewrites," said Burman. "It was great to work along side with

one so open to what we were presenting him. The Tracker, for instance: I thought, 'What if one of the Brood Warrior pods became his little spy?' It would give this film a whole other point-of-view. Unfortunately, there was a fixed budget and we had already taken on much more than they could afford."

Visual effects supervisor Ranone salvaged Burman's Tracker when he came on the film. "The Tracker is sort of a demonic version of an Alaskan King Crab," said Ranone. "The Cybersuit throws them and they become weapons. It's able to fly and it has eyes all over its abdomen. Of course what it is is a satellite, and it travels the city looking for the cybersuit. It was a little too costly to afford the Burmans for this, and I was pretty amazed when I came on the project that no one was doing the Tracker and it looked like it needed to be cut out. I felt sad about that because it actually was a big story point, and who wants to lose a cool creature?"

But there was a new effects

shop starting-up, headed by with Dan Riebert, whom Ranone knew from RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD III. The shop is called Interactive Life Forms in Granada Hills and Ranone talked to Riebert about doing the Tracker. "Dan came in, did his drawings, Manny loved the concepts and Dan did all the Tracker makeup effects on-set. The Tracker was excellent. It's one of my favorite things in the film. I loved the paint scheme, and it looks like something you'd find walking on the bottom of the ocean, yet it has its necessary form of cuteness, so it's not too hideous. It complimented the Brood Warrior, so I'm glad it remained in the film. Those guys came through very well and I wish all the luck to them in the future."

One of the last effects worked out by the Burmans was exactly what Spencer sees when he is inside the biomechanical chamber. "It took us weeks to decide just how oversized this head chamber should be," said Burman. "Everybody had an opinion, each one different. There were also questions about what angles we would be shooting—over shoulders, on Spencer, profiles, low, high, and what lenses would accommodate these angles? We finally decided on something around 22 inches in diameter that could be broken down into four pieces. After all, about 20% of the picture will be Spencer talking to the cybersuit. Our aim was to create a relationship between these two using as many possibilities in angles and POV's as possible. For instance, there would be a shot of Spencer talking to the cybersuit, the Cybersuit talking back from inside, and then from the outside. By creating the different elements, it gave them many various angles to edit from."

Ranone added, "The nice thing about this movie is that it's a movie where the effects work with the picture, they don't take over the picture. It's sort of like a film made in the '50s. It's a good quality kids' film that isn't like a typical '90s picture where it has to have all of these ridiculous 'just say no to that and the other.' It's just a good tale." □

MAKEUP EFFECTS

*The Burman Studio
makes fantasy a reality.*

By James Van Hise

The multi-award-winning Burman Studio brought to THE WARRIOR OF WAVERLY STREET team more than 25 years of motion picture experience and more than 75 feature motion picture credits that began with the ground-breaking PLANET OF THE APES, working with acclaimed filmmakers like Spielberg, Coppola, Lucas, Kasdan, Scorsese and DeBont.

The Burmans received an Academy Award nomination for Richard Donner's Bill Murray-starrer SCROOGED, and have won several Emmys for their television work, which includes CHICAGO HOPE and Tracy Ullman's HBO series. Recent films include the currently lens-

ing CON AIR, ERASER, and POWDER.

"They liked our ideas," Tom Burman said. "From there we helped with the sale of the film at the [1995] Cannes Film Festival by designing maquettes of the character. In the film we designed the Cybersuit, the Brood Warriors and also the little aliens that make the Cybersuit, the Trelkins."

The Burmans were also responsible for many of the props and morphing pieces. "It was overly ambitious for a small movie," said Burman. "It was an eight-week shoot and could have easily used sixteen, and we worked night and day, seven days per week, to make THE WARRIOR OF WAVERLY STREET a reality." □

Left: Inside the Cybersuit from Spencer's point of view.
Right: The Burman's design of the interior view.



Top: Tom and Bari Burman with design maquettes of Cybersuit, Trelkin and Brood Warrior. Bottom: The Brood Warrior, a test shot with actor Brian Simpson.



RICHARD EDLUND

ON THE EFFECTS LEGACY OF

STAR WARS

The visual effects pioneer remembers his role in the groundbreaking production.

By Ben Herndon

An odd thing sticks in Richard Edlund's memory about the eve of the STAR WARS national release nearly 20 years ago. "On STAR WARS, I remember just before the premiere producer Gary Kurtz was trying to get all the models in nice display cases to put them in the theatre lobby and I thought, 'Geez, Gary. Is it a good idea to do that? You may be breaking the bubble for the audience.'"

Edlund needn't have worried. "It actually had a positive effect," he marveled. "It was so mysterious to the audience that they could witness the shots and then look at these models and say, 'Well, how in the hell did they do that?'"

Edlund runs Hollywood's Boss Film Corporation, one of the leading effects suppliers in the movie industry—the company behind the cloning magic of last summer's Michael Keaton comedy *MULTIPLICITY*. Edlund got his start in movie effects on STAR WARS, and was one of the chief architects of ILM—now his chief competitor—and the effects strides achieved by the STAR WARS trilogy.

"If STAR WARS and, let's say, up to *RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK* and maybe through *POLTERGEIST* was the renaissance of effects—we're beyond the renaissance now," Edlund stated. "The writers know they can put whatever they want into a script and we can pull it off.

"We're out of the renaissance and maybe into a middle period now," he re-asserted, "but it's a period of development and refinement. We try not to fall back on the old 'let's use effects #13a



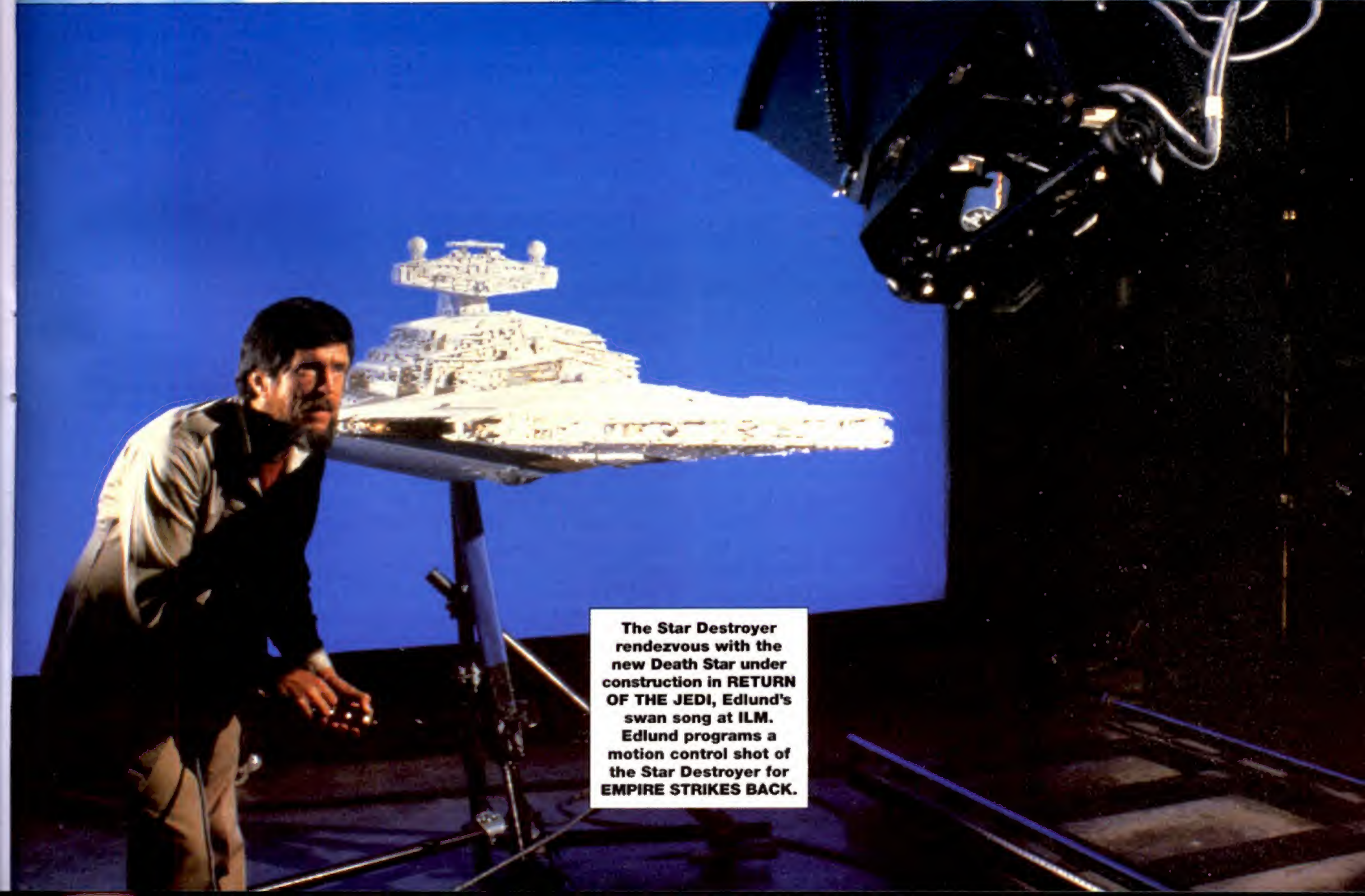
Richard Edlund, who now heads up Hollywood's Boss Film Corporation, holds a miniature model of the Imperial probe robot (probot) during filming of *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. The full-size probot was used in close-ups on location in Norway, the miniature for stop frame animation to show the probe droid floating.

again...' We try to figure out how to use more off-the-shelf equipment because there is more off-the-shelf equipment available as you go along and even though everything that comes in here [at Boss] gets hot-rodged in some way or another, we try not to re-invent the wheel."

Those who call Edlund a visual effects "wizard" actually sell him short if that label conjures up images of the wave of a wand and *presto!* If much of his work does appear to be sheer sorcery, then master craftsmen-like Al Mohr and Ernest Haller, artists like Fritz Lang, and film theorists like William Spottiswode were magicians, too. A self-confessed workaholic, Edlund is more of a techno-artist with a spellbinding tool kit—a true pioneer in his field, like a Karl Freund or a Gregg Toland. Back in the days before *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY* or even *STAR TREK*, there were no super compartmentalized effects factories, only a few renegade optical geniuses like Trumbull, Dykstra, Veevers, and others. Today, Edlund regularly sets the pace in this pantheon.

Up north in a galaxy far, far away lies the distant world of Lucasfilm, Ltd. In 1975 Edlund joined George Lucas' production team as first cameraman for the miniature and optical effects unit—initially just a phone on a desk in an empty San Fernando Valley warehouse—on a film that would strongly affect the course of motion picture history.

Edlund recalled those days of effects pioneering and sets the record straight of just how bare bones the operation was in the beginning. "It was a card table," he corrected, referring to half of the furniture the Lucasfilm empire started out



The Star Destroyer rendezvous with the new Death Star under construction in RETURN OF THE JEDI, Edlund's swan song at ILM. Edlund programs a motion control shot of the Star Destroyer for EMPIRE STRIKES BACK.

THE EFFECTS LEGACY OF STAR WARS

DENNIS MUREN

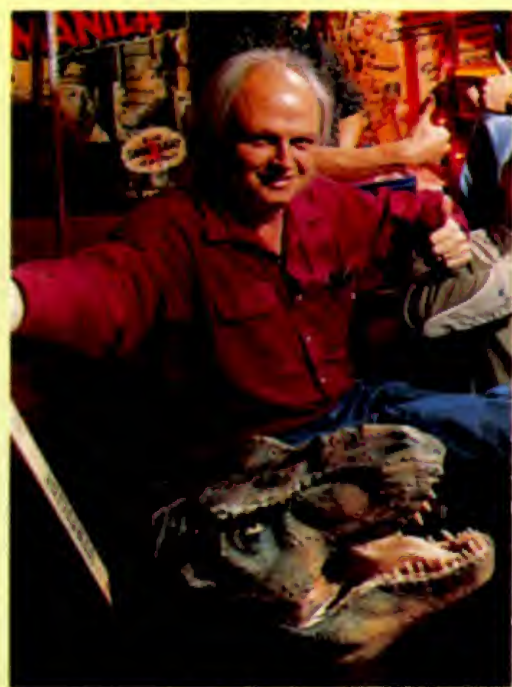
The multiple Oscar-winner takes a fond look back.

By Lawrence French

As an effects cameraman on STAR WARS, Dennis Muren launched on a career path that has seen him skyrocket to the very peak of his profession. Muren's work has garnered him a record eight Academy Awards. His latest Oscar was for the breakthrough CGI dinosaur effects in JURASSIC PARK. Looking back at STAR WARS, Muren recalled that its phenomenal success was responsible for opening up a whole new vista in the effects field.

"Science-fiction films had usually been low-budget until STAR WARS," said Muren. "After the impact made by STAR WARS, it suddenly made the genre acceptable to a new audience. The genre was always around, but it wasn't mainstream, and I think STAR WARS made it mainstream. It was partly because there was a huge ba-

Muren with his effects team on JURASSIC PARK, carrying on the effects legacy of STAR WARS at ILM.



EMPIRE STRIKES BACK effects director of photography Dennis Muren sets up a Tauntaun shot. R: A stop-motion composite. Muren developed go-motion until CGI took over.

by-boomer generation that was out there ready for it. You had George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, two filmmakers from that same generation, who wanted to see those kinds of movies. Both George and Steven really had a pulse on what the public would go for. There had been a few things before STAR WARS, but now the studios would back these big-budget effects films."

At the time of STAR WARS initial release in 1977, Muren felt, as George Lucas did, that many of the effects shots could have been improved. "All of us wanted to do better on STAR WARS," admitted Muren, "but we just didn't have enough time. One of the things I like about what's going on now, with the special edition, is we have a chance to fix some of the shots. There were about 20 shots that I was unhappy with. I can understand people not wanting to alter the movie and there's been a lot of talk about that, but the other version is still there. As someone

who worked on STAR WARS, I find it's a wonderful opportunity to make it like you've always wanted it to be."

Muren became involved in the refurbishing of STAR WARS shortly after completing his work on JURASSIC PARK. "I went through the film with George and we decided which shots we'd like to redo," said Muren. "George had a bunch of shots, and I had a bunch of shots we both wanted to redo. I worked on the design of them and the storyboards of them, but I didn't follow through on the shooting of them. I sort of kept an eye on them, though. I was involved a little bit with THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK and RETURN OF THE JEDI, at the very beginning, figuring out what we should do to them: what technology we should use, and do we want to push the technology, which we did, so it will be applicable to future projects. We didn't want to do things the same way. We already know about

those, so we were trying to come up with new ways to do things. Most of it was digitally done, using CGI."

While George Lucas wanted to enrich scenes with new creatures, Muren was more concerned about correcting flaws in the existing shots. "The things I was unhappy with were shots that were technically not quite right," remarked Muren. "The moves were not quite right in some of the dogfight scenes, and the compositing of shots could be improved, now that



we're doing things digitally. Originally George had wanted to embellish some of the shots, adding things like the Ronto [a dinosaur-like creature that appears in the streets of Mos Eisley]. A lot has been corrected, but not everything. We didn't want to do the whole movie, because it was just too complicated and expensive. You want to keep some of it, and you don't want it to stand out. Hopefully, it's not going to look like there's a bunch of new work in the movie. It's maybe just a little bit different than you remembered it. The shots were designed to look like they were done in 1976, not like they're contemporary."

Muren is now working with Steven Spielberg on creating new



Muren, as 2nd effects cameraman on *STAR WARS*, takes a light-meter reading on *Dark Star*. Muren is the last of the *STAR WARS* effects crew still at ILM.

CGI dinosaurs for *THE LOST WORLD*. After that, he'll begin preparations for *THE CLONE WARS*, the next episode of *STAR WARS*. "I'm focused on *THE LOST WORLD* right now," said Muren, "so I don't really know what's going on with the new *STAR WARS* movie. I'm interested in it, and I've seen some of the work that's happened, so I think it will be really neat. I've heard about the script, but I haven't seen it yet. I don't think very many people have read the script."

With the advent of computer graphics and virtual lighting, Muren's role has evolved from being somewhat hands-on, to totally hands-off. "There's absolutely no tactile connection to the work anymore," admitted Muren. "I don't run around and move the lights. There's so many shots going on, I just direct the guys. I'll tell them the kinds of lighting we need, which direction the fill light should be coming from, and so forth. But I'm not touching anything. There's too many shots going on for me to do that, although it's something I miss doing."

As a multiple Oscar winner, Muren is naturally gratified, but points out that many deserving films have never even been nominated. "DARBY O'GILL AND THE LITTLE PEOPLE, was never nominated," exclaimed Muren. "None of Ray Harryhausen's films were ever nominated. ALWAYS had some great fire effects in it, but it wasn't nominated. So it is what it is, and I don't think of the Oscars as any more than that. We were all very surprised when we didn't get a nomination for *CASPER*. It's not really a competition, like a football game or a race, where you can get ready for

it, and then you go do it and it's over. You just do the best work you can, and some other group judges everything, but you really have no control over it."

Muren has been nominated opposite Richard Edlund, his former ILM colleague, more than once. Muren praised Edlund's contributions to the *STAR WARS* saga as an "effects hot-rodder," capable of customizing the hardware needed to get the job done.

"Richard was very good at building equipment," recalled Muren. "He has a very good grasp of cameras and lenses and how to put those things together. I remember when we were first trying to get the Dykstraflex camera to work, we were getting a light leak. I would throw up my hands and say, 'How can you have a camera with a light leak?' Richard would sit down and solve the light leak problem in 20 minutes. He really knows how all that stuff goes together. He can look at a problem and figure out how to solve it, just by analyzing it."

"Richard put together the four-headed optical printer at ILM, and he built the Empire cameras, which were the 8 perf cameras we adapted for use on *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. We were using VistaVision cameras that had been built originally by Paramount and Technicolor, but we needed a smaller camera, and I was pushing for something that would be compact, so we could take it out on location. Richard and Gene Whiteman built these two small VistaVision cameras that took 400-foot loads of film. One was a high-speed camera, that could shoot at 72 fps." □

RICHARD EDLUND

"I came from the C-clamp and baling wire school of effects shooting. I didn't have a feature under my belt. *STAR WARS* was my first opportunity to do that."

with. "Fortunately I was working with a real crack group of guys and we were all like a bunch of renegades. We all had experience and talent but no 'track record' to speak of. I'd shot a lot of commercials and done a lot of piece work on features and second unit things, but I didn't really have a feature under my belt. *STAR WARS* was my first opportunity to do that."

"I was working at Bob Abel's at the time," Edlund recalled, "so I came from the 'C-clamp and baling wire' school of effects shooting. At Abel's we were doing early experiments on motion control work on graphics for television and the concept of animating light and the 'candy-apple neons' and that stuff was something I really developed. We were using old teletype machines to program on punch tape. We had one computer known as HAL—Con Pederson named it HAL. Con was one of the effects supervisors on *2001*—I learned a lot from Con. He's sort of an unsung hero, also."

It was here that Edlund met an important contact and future friend. "While I was at Abel's I met Dykstra," he said. "And of course Dyk and I worked really well together and we'd build up camera systems at Abel's using files and hacksaws and whatever it took. We used to make regular trips to C&H Sales, which is a kind of a hi-tech surplus joint in Pasadena. I'd go out there with an idea of how I was going to do a shot and then figure out mechanically I'd need *this*, I can use *those*, and some of *that*, and I can saw *this* gear off and put it with *that*—it was a lot of fun. I've got a book full of Polaroids of these ridiculous looking set-ups—flipping fresnel lenses and motorized filters that would spin in front of the camera during time exposures."

"So I was naturally the guy to get in on this *STAR WARS*

project," Edlund continued, "because there was a lot of that kind of stuff to do. When I was at Abel's I had been after Bob to get an optical department together because we were doing all of our shots in-camera, which was extraordinarily time consuming—if you made one mistake you'd have to go back and shoot the whole thing over again—and I've never been that good. If I get in the dark with nothing but a little white dot with the camera going up and down the track for each pass and doing 120 pass shots...I start losing it because I start daydreaming."

To amass the optical equipment to be used on *STAR WARS*, Edlund combed camera warehouses all over Hollywood and L. A. and came up with some rare treasures that determined the film format that Lucasfilm would later achieve miracles with. "I discovered at that time that there was a VistaVision printer that we could have gotten for practically nothing," he recalled enthusiastically.

Edlund, first effects cameraman on *STAR WARS*, filming explosions in the ILM parking lot in 1976.





Above: The Jawa Traders board their Sand Crawler, filmed live and full-scale in Tunisia for STAR WARS. Below: The miniature Sand Crawler filmed post-production at ILM. STAR WARS was the prototype for today's effects movie event blockbusters.



ly, "and I thought, wait—Vistavision would be a fantastic format because it's a big format, uses 35mm film, you can get quality that you can reduce and all that kind of stuff. I think maybe that was the nexus of the concept of using Vistavision on STAR WARS."

At the time no one could foresee that the odd pieces of gear Edlund was scrounging together would form the backbone of a visual effects dynasty. "All this equipment was sitting around and it was all dusty. When you'd call somebody up and say you wanted to come over and look at their Vistavision camera, they'd go out and dust it off before you got there," he laughed. "And they'd be hopeful to get a thousand bucks for it, maybe. We actually purchased the camera and we purchased a printer for \$14,000, I remember, from Howard Anderson Co. He hadn't used it for 20 years. We got an aerial head

printer and a couple of other cameras and a bunch of roto cameras that were in these weird old mirror-filled roto stands—whole handfuls of camera movements and things like that. I think I paid \$6000 for two complete camera packages—two cameras, magazines, lenses, matte boxes, motors, you name it—it was all there. I think there were about 20 cases of the stuff.

"There were high-speed cameras at Paramount, but Paramount didn't want to sell anything, so I used to rent cameras from Dick Barlow who was at that time running the camera department, and they had two Vistavision high-speed cameras and they were humongous things with huge beagle-ear film magazines coming off the side of each camera. Gawd, I'd shoot with those things coming down wires. I used to run that camera all the time at 100 frames per second, but I was

LEARNING SCALES

"In the case of STAR WARS, we had built a violin and didn't know how to play it yet," said Edlund, "so we had to learn how to play scales on the instrument on STAR WARS."

very careful of it because it was sort of my baby. We used to have to pay \$300 a day on that thing.

"In the case of STAR WARS, we had built a violin basically and didn't know how to play it yet, so we had to learn how to play scales on the instrument on STAR WARS."

Dennis Muren, the last of the STAR WARS pioneers still left at ILM, recalled working with Edlund on STAR WARS' groundbreaking effects.

"I met Richard just before I got hired for STAR WARS," said Muren. "I went in for an interview with John Dykstra and met Richard. John hired me, because they needed somebody to work with Richard as a camera operator, so that was my role at the beginning of the show. Then, halfway through STAR WARS, we split-up, and George dealt with Richard in programming shots for the day shift, and during the nighttime, George worked with Ken Ralston and myself."

Muren praised Edlund as an "effects hot-rodder," someone who could custom-build the equipment needed to get the effects job done. "When we first started working on THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, I was doing scheduling and figuring

out how the shots were going to be done, and it became evident that we had to have cameras that allowed us to change the film magazines quickly," recalled Muren. "That was important when we were shooting the background plates on location, with all the actors. With these VistaVision cameras you could spend 10 or 15 minutes changing a roll of film, and we needed something quicker. So Richard came up with a camera that was quick and built it, which was really, really good. That's rather rare, because in the group I came from, you never would have thought, 'I need to sit down and build a camera.' That would have never have even crossed my mind, because there wouldn't be any money for it, and none of my group knew how to do that. It's very hard to build a camera. It was kind of amazing that it happened. You have to be smart about it, putting all the pieces together until finally you've got a camera. After that we used them at ILM all the time."

Muren chose to stay at ILM when Edlund left to form Boss Film, his own effects company. "I haven't worked a lot with Richard, even when we were on the same film, because we had our own sequences, especially

Edlund and effects supervisor John Dykstra, filming a Death Star facade. Edlund scrounged up the film's VistaVision cameras from all over Hollywood.





A walker model exploded and filmed high speed at ILM for *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. Below: Edlund (l) and visual effects co-supervisor Brian Johnson plan the Walker sequence with effects art director Joe Johnston (r), now a film director in his own right (*JUMANJI*).

on *RETURN OF THE JEDI*," said Muren. "I did the speeder bike chase in the forest and the Rancor creature, and Richard did Jabba's sail barge and the band sequence, while Ken Ralston did a lot of the space battles. We broke it up, because the show was so big, everyone had their own sequences. There really wasn't that much contact while we were working on the shots. We would see each other's work afterwards, and talk about it then."

Summed up Muren about Edlund's contribution to *STAR WARS*' effects legacy, "It was very valuable to have people like Richard, who could build cameras, because a lot of the new imagery came from the technology. So you had to have people who could understand the technology and build the gear. That allowed us to produce the imagery that looked different than what had been seen before."

Zero-gravity explosion expert on *STAR WARS* and *EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, Joe

Viskocil, recalled his first meeting with Edlund after a screening of some high detonation dailies. "I will never forget this one person coming out of nowhere," recalled Viskocil, "and saying, 'There's our Death Star!'"

Edlund would shoot many of Viskocil's explosions at the Van Nuys ILM facility, as well as a myriad of other model shots. "I realized that he was all over the place at ILM," said Viskocil. "He really worked very hard there. As far as I was concerned he was the major driving force behind *STAR WARS*."

The more driven the force, the more vast the scope of knowledge acquired. Edlund gained much from this turning point in his career and continued to learn along the way.

"During the eight years with Lucasfilm, I and the staff that worked with me learned what *not* to do next time," explained Edlund. "Whenever you do something for the first time you



tend to maybe go off in the direction that isn't the most efficient and yet it still works and it's still great. I think this holds with an effects project or with any sort of prototype endeavor. That's why when we started this company down here we had a leg up on things because we had already made all the mistakes."

Although the special effects business has gotten crowded since the groundbreaking days

of *STAR WARS*, Edlund noted that in 1975 it was a pretty scarce field.

"During *STAR WARS* there was no competition," he said. "A lot of studios turned the show down because they didn't think it could be done. Film history shows that it was done and done with style—and blood, sweat, and hardware."

"On *STAR WARS* there was such a hideous amount of

work," Edlund remembered. "I'd have shots with 15 to 20 gobo stands, with flags and nets and lights and different lights with motorized flags working with them and things like that in order to make the shots. Not only that, I had to shoot elements where I had more than one ship in the shot. Normally we'd shoot all the ships separate, but I did that to put as much in one blue screen element as possible because the optical department wasn't really the virtuoso department that it needed to be—nor were we either—so we were all going through a lot of learning.

"You'd get an incredibly complex set-up and you'd shoot it and keep your fingers crossed that it was all okay because you had to then finish that shot, break everything down and set up another shot. I had to do four or five motion control shots a day and that's a lot of cranking."

After STAR WARS, Edlund went on to work on the visual effects for television's BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, for which he received the 1979 Emmy Special Achievement Award. The additional experience he picked up on GALACTICA was invaluable when it came time to shoot the second episode of the STAR WARS trilogy.

"By the time we got to EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, we had gotten better at it," said Edlund. He disagreed with the notion that shooting effects for the television small-screen format represented anything less than more opportunity for researching and developing the art.

"Formats aside, the ability to utilize the equipment had increased significantly since STAR WARS—when we were basically learning," he explained. "On GALACTICA we were not restricted. Basically they said to us, 'Shoot whatever you want and we'll cut it in...' and basically that's what we did. We came up with a lot of interesting things.

"On EMPIRE," Edlund continued, "we went beyond that. I built another system up at ILM called the Vistacruiser which is probably the best motion control camera in the world."

With the experience under his belt from STAR WARS and

PROTOTYPE EFFECTS PROJECTS

"Whenever you do something for the first time, you tend to maybe go off in the direction that isn't the most efficient and yet it still works and it's still great."



Supervisors Richard Edlund (r) and Brian Johnson (l) pick out "nernies" to be used for model detailing, with director Irvin Kirshner on EMPIRE STRIKES BACK.

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA and with the strides made in the development of optical effects technology, Edlund would now embark on a pair of film projects at Lucasfilm with tremendous effects demands and unlike anything ever seen before on the screen.

With the gigantic acclaim that accompanied both RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK and POLTERGEIST, Edlund would plunge straight into the most ambitious project ever seen from the Lucasfilm fantasy mill. His challenges on what was initially titled REVENGE OF THE JEDI lay on the desert planet Tatooine's exciting Rescue At The Sarlacc Pit and the Death Star Tunnel Chase—the film's climactic highlight.

"You had these supposedly light-speed X-Wings flying about the actual speed of a Spad from a World War I dogfight," he pointed out. "You could take that license."

JEDI head effects animator Garry Waller, later Boss Film special projects and animation supervisor, recalled the gathering of different animators—

some ILMers up from E.T. and DRAGONSLAYER, as well as Edlund's latest two "non-space" pictures, RAIDERS and POLTERGEIST.

"Those guys that came in from POLTERGEIST were real traditional animators and had a style that way which was very good," said Waller, "but they didn't understand the kind of laser jockey style of JEDI." No matter. It was post time at the Lucasville Racetrack and the flag was up.

Many of RETURN OF THE JEDI's key scenes were enhanced by animated effects by the ILM animation staff—some of whom emigrated with Edlund to become Boss Film team members. The sadistic bolts of lightning that shot from the Emperor's hands and cruelly harassed Luke Skywalker were developed by Terry Windell, who left ILM to become a Boss Film art director. On screen for a surprising length of time for a single animated effect, Windell credited the help he got from the burgeoning staff of effects animators brought on for JEDI.

Bill Neil shot many of the tunnel interiors, the attack on the surface of the Death Star, and the destruction of the reac-

tor core. "There are two kinds of things going on there," said Neil. "One was actually pyrotechnic effects, with the Empire high-speed camera mounted on a little trolley blasted with an air ram down through the tunnel. Then with the Vistacruiser—the camera that shoots motion control speeds very slowly—all the other models were shot flying through the tunnel. And often we were shooting in reverse. If they were flying forward through the tunnel, we would be shooting in reverse. The top of the tunnel would be coming off in sections as the camera crane was moving through the tunnel."

In contrast to the high-speed air-ram footage, Lando's Tunnel Escape footage was shot at two frames per second. Thaine Morris's savvy regarding heat and flame intensity enabled Edlund's people to achieve more than just a cross-your-fingers "Take One" on expensive and time-consuming shots like Lando's Tunnel Escape. For this shot, Morris actually turned down the heat so that the interior of the "miniature" Death Star escape tunnel was not scorched heavily by the pursuing fireball which came from 80 separate pyrotechnic mortars along the length of the tunnel. Morris figures the effects camera crew probably could have pushed four total takes inside the tunnel. They got it in two.

"The fire was fairly cool," he revealed. "We were using some curious chemicals in there to make the fire cool so it wouldn't ruin the tunnel."

Morris wasn't as worried about his flame's effect on the durable tunnel interior as he was about the insanely expensive Empire (modified VistaVision) high-speed camera which was mounted on the bat-outta-hell air ram on a track beneath the tunnel model.

There were other cases of wear and tear involved with planning this scene. "It was very nerve wracking with that kind of money mounted inside of a fireball. You know that if you burn the camera up," Morris warned, "you're gonna be in a lotta trouble."

"That was the scariest shot I think I was ever on," he shuddered. "We rigged computer-

STAR THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK WARS.

STOP MOTION ANIMATION

*Phil Tippett on creating
Tauntauns and Walkers.*

By Lawrence French

When George Lucas and producer Gary Kurtz began planning the effects for *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* they didn't want to simply repeat what had been accomplished in *STAR WARS*, but set out to utilize some new and different effects techniques. "One of our goals in *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*," stated Kurtz, "was to do a stop-motion sequence that integrated well with the live-action. It's very difficult to match stop-motion and live-action. The way the script was going, if we were going to be using the mechanical devices and animals we envisioned, then stop-motion would

be the best way to deal with that."

To create the stop-motion sequences, Lucas and Kurtz turned once again to Phil Tippett and Jon Berg, who would expertly animate the Tauntauns—an imaginary beast of burden indigenous to the planet Hoth—as well as the massive Imperial snow walkers (or AT-AT's, for All Terrain Armored Transport). "The design for the Tauntaun came about from talking with George," related Tippett. "He said, 'Show me some creatures that look like a snow lizard,' so I did a bunch of pencil drawings and some little maquettes. Then we made some selections and developed them further. We produced maquettes, so Stuart



Phil Tippett, who now heads his own San Rafael effects company, animates a Tauntaun for *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. Below: The Tauntaun armature.

Freeborn could construct a full-scale prop they could use for the live-action filming in Norway. Then we started working on the stop-motion miniature, which was about a foot high."

Early sketches of the Tauntaun by Ralph McQuarrie made the creature more reptilian, although Tippett veered toward making it more of a mammal. "The contour of the creature as it ended-up is very similar to a Kangaroo," noted Kurtz. "It has very strong back legs, and little front legs. The face is a cross between a lot of animals, with some Camel-like qualities in the ears."



"I went more towards a Llama-like creature," related Tippett. "It's like a Chimera or a Griffin, where parts of animals are put together in different ways. Once I came up with the basic design, I knew I'd be able make it work as a basic bipedal running creature. It has a cross between lion legs and ostrich legs."

A spectacular helicopter shot of Hoth, introduces us to Luke Skywalker, riding his Tauntaun across a vast expanse of frozen wastelands. The shot required mounting a VistaVision camera in a special gyroscopic Wesscam mount, in order to obtain the stability needed for the background plate. "A lot of people thought that shot was a miniature landscape," remarked Kurtz. "However, it was a real helicopter shot of a glacier in Norway, with a Tauntaun superimposed into the shot."

The miniature Tauntaun was

Tippett (left) and Jon Berg (right) animate the Snow Walkers of *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* at ILM. The Tippett Studio is currently supervising the effects for TriStar's *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, directed by Paul Verhoeven.



PHIL TIPPETT

“Those first movies were pretty special, which is why I developed my own studio, to maintain that kind of feeling, but it’s a tough thing to recapture.”

animated by Tippett and then rotoscoped frame for frame into the background shot. “We shot the Tauntaun full frame on a lathe turntable set,” revealed Tippett. “The floor of the set would drop out, so for each movement of the puppet, we’d shoot two separate frames, to get an extraction of the Tauntaun’s shadow. We’d animate the Tauntaun against the ground plane, to get the shadow, then we’d pull the ground plane out of the way to reveal the blue screen behind the puppet. Then, I’d expose a frame of that, for the blue screen matte shot of the Tauntaun. For every frame I adjusted the lathe bed, so the angle of the background plate would be matched exactly. Those elements were then taken and plotted in the animation department, to give the puppet it’s forward momentum, because all the animation was done standing in place. So we plotted the Tauntaun moving across the snowy terrain.”

Tippett animates a Snow Walker in front of a cyclorama backdrop painted by Mike Pangrazio, who now heads Matte World. R: Video playback.

Tippett felt it was far easier inserting the Tauntaun and it’s shadow into a live-action background, than building a huge miniature set and doing the shot all in-camera. “The way we did it was actually more animation friendly,” maintained Tippett. “The shot runs on for quite some time before you see the Tauntaun, so it would mean building a huge miniature set and then lighting it, which would have been a nightmare. Then we’d have to make trap doors, so it would have made it very difficult to animate. As it was, doing some of the Snow Walker shots on those big miniature sets was pretty grueling.”

During the production of *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, Tippett and Dennis Muren began their initial research on how to eliminate the jerky strobing effect that has long been a dilemma to stop-motion animators. “We tried to get some rudimentary blurring effect on the

Tauntaun,” said Tippett. “We started to integrate some of the motion-control technology with the animation, which ultimately led to the go-motion device we developed for *DRAGONSLAYER*. We had to contend with a lot of engineering and mechanical problems to hide the support rods. We had many different kinds of lights and cutters. We had cards that were painted in different colors, that we would literally animate while we were shooting. We had to make sure the color value of the support rod was the same as the background, so you wouldn’t be able to see the rods in the shot. It was a lot of work, fiddling with everything. All the Tauntaun puppets had hair, so they had to be taxidermied and that meant a lot of testing, as well.”

All different kinds of animals were photographed and then studied, to help obtain the motion blurring effect used on the Tauntauns. “As part of the computer control of the models,” said Kurtz, “we’d move the puppet just a slight amount for each frame. It was photographed the way it would be as if it were really running. Once we got to the point where you could start to blur the edges of a creature, it helped to take away the feeling of it being artificially superimposed over a scene.”



The Imperial Walkers attack on Hoth.

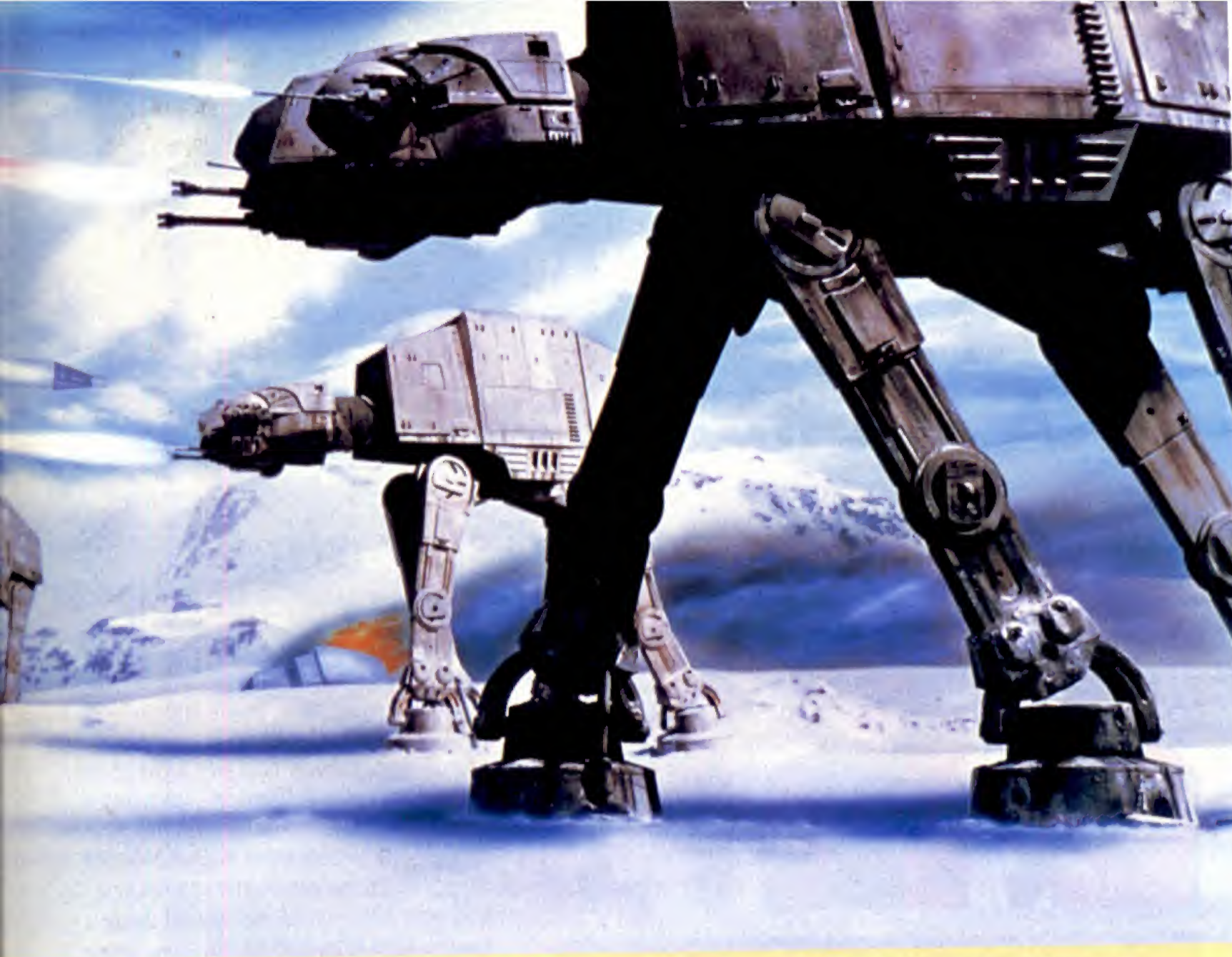
ics were employed to indicate how the various elements would relate to each other, before the actual scenes were shot. “Peter Kuran and his crew sketched out those shots,” said Kurtz. “It was like pencil tests in normal animation. It helped us to analyze the normal cycle of movement. When a Speeder comes towards the camera and peels off to the right, that was sketched in by the rotoscoping department. It allowed the editors to cut the scene between two close-up’s of the pilots, to see how the pace was going. We did that for the Speeder and Walker battle, because there was no way we could cut in World War II battle footage to simulate some of the movements, as we had done with *STAR WARS*. Our biggest problem was integrating the special effects scenes with the live action. If you waited until the very end and just dropped it in, you’d realize that the editorial pace shifts radically. The pencil tests also allowed us to drop about 20 shots that were storyboarded and weren’t needed.”

With a fleet of Snow Walkers that needed to be animated, Tippett and Jon Berg had their work cut out for them, and they accomplished most of the anima-

For the epic battle between the Imperial Snow Walkers and the Rebel Snow Speeders, several elements had to be combined. “The Speeders were done with motion-control photography,” revealed Kurtz, “while the Walkers were done in stop-motion. The backgrounds in many cases were aerial shots we had filmed in Norway, so we had a variety of elements to put together.”

Because of the complicated nature of the sequence, animat-





Tippett and Berg's animation employed three 18-inch stop-motion models, with baking soda used as snow.

tion by themselves, with assistance from Doug Beswick on a few of the shots. One of the more difficult scenes to achieve was shooting the Snow Walker tipping over and crashing to the ground. "When the Speeder starts wrapping the rope around the legs of the Walker," explained Tippett, "Pete Kuran animated a rope in 2-D cell animation that twisted around the legs. Then, Jon Berg came up with an elastic band he wrapped around the Walker's leg. Jon used that to simulate the rope and he animated the shots where the Walker was starting to get tripped-up and falls over. The actual impact

was done with a large scale prop that was shot by Richard Edlund. It was a quarter scale prop, that was shot at high speed, and was posed to match the stop-motion model. So we cut from the stop-motion model, to the much bigger model for the impact."

Everything in *EMPIRE* that required a background plate, was shot against a blue-screen, while miniature work was often done against matte paintings. Tippett came up with the Wampa Snow creature, after the original version done in England was deemed unsuitable. "They had come up with this funky thing that looked really

bad," declared Tippett. "So Jon Berg, Joe Johnston and I came up with this really quick insert shot of a Wampa. It should have been used even less than what appears in the movie."

Although *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* contained some ground-breaking effects work, Tippett recalled that most of the crew were quite inexperienced. "There were about 80 people working on the effects," said Tippett, "and only about 12 of us had any kind of experience working on other movies. Most of the people had just worked on *STAR WARS*, or done some television commercials. We had ridiculous hours, as a result of dailies, because there wasn't a lab in San Francisco back then. They had to send the dailies out to Washington, and they wouldn't come back until one or two in the afternoon. We'd kind of stumble in around noon, and work really late into the night. Sometimes we'd stay up all night, and on Fridays we'd have a big beer party, so it was a great time. Those first movies were pretty special, which is why I developed my own studio, to maintain that kind of feeling, but it's a tough thing to recapture." □

Special effects artist Nilo Rodis (l), the production designer of 1995's *JOHNNY MNEMONIC*, constructs the Walker set with model-maker Scott Marshall.



timed explosions so they wouldn't catch the camera as we shot the camera through there—then set the timing so that as the camera's rippin' through there at about 40 mph the fire is right behind it."

Morris carefully mounted the camera onto the air ram. "We set everything up," he recalled. "We put that Empire camera on it, which is—I've heard stories of—half a million dollars. Push one switch and it's loose! Right? If it slows down we've ruined the camera, if it speeds up we gotta do another take. We got it in two takes."

Boss Film model shop foreman, Mark Stetson—who first joined Edlund for *GHOST-BUSTERS* and 2010—expressed a widely held opinion. "Thaine is a real master of fire," swore Stetson. "I don't think I'd want anybody else burning or exploding my models."

By comparison, blowing up Jabba's Barge was more of a walk in the park. With sand imported from key points around the Yuma, Arizona desert, a six-foot barge model was detonated and filmed atop the ILM stage. Morris decided against attempting to blow up the full-size barge, constructed on location out near the Sarlacc pit. "It was made out of plywood and was built like a pole barn—they set telephone poles in the ground and then constructed over the phone poles," he explained.

Edlund holds court at Boss Film, the Hollywood company passed on to him by effects legend Douglas Trumbull.



THE EFFECTS LEGACY OF STAR WARS

CANTINA CAMARADERIE

Phil Tippett on creating the Mos Eisley aliens.

By Lawrence French

Hollywood loves success, and when STAR WARS became the biggest success of all time, it was bound to have a tremendous impact on studios and filmmakers. It certainly brought a new standard to the special effects field, where just the year before, the Oscar for visual effects went to the pedestrian work done for KING KONG. Now, twenty years later, many of the effects personnel who cut their teeth on STAR WARS have risen to eminent positions in their field, where they continue to push the boundaries of movie magic.

Among the notable STAR WARS alumni are Dennis Muren, Richard Edlund, Ken Ralston, Peter Kuran and Bruce Nicholson, to name just a few. Another effects maestro whose career began with STAR WARS was Phil Tippett. "STAR WARS changed the whole field," noted Tippett, whose company in San Rafael is currently supervising the effects for TriStar's STARSHIP TROOPERS. "Up until then, effects work had really been a garage operation. Nobody wanted to do this kind of work. There really wasn't anything available at the studios. Dennis [Muren], Ken [Ralston] and I could barely find work. STAR WARS was the big break for all of us, and George was very supportive, allowing us a lot of freedom. We were all in our early 20s, and the atmosphere was great. We existed without the tremendous amount of management that you have today. It was almost like we were a group of unsupervised children. We were the kids who had inherited this terrific garage. It was a very rare and magical time."

Working on an effects spectacular like STAR WARS provided Tippett the opportunity to put what he

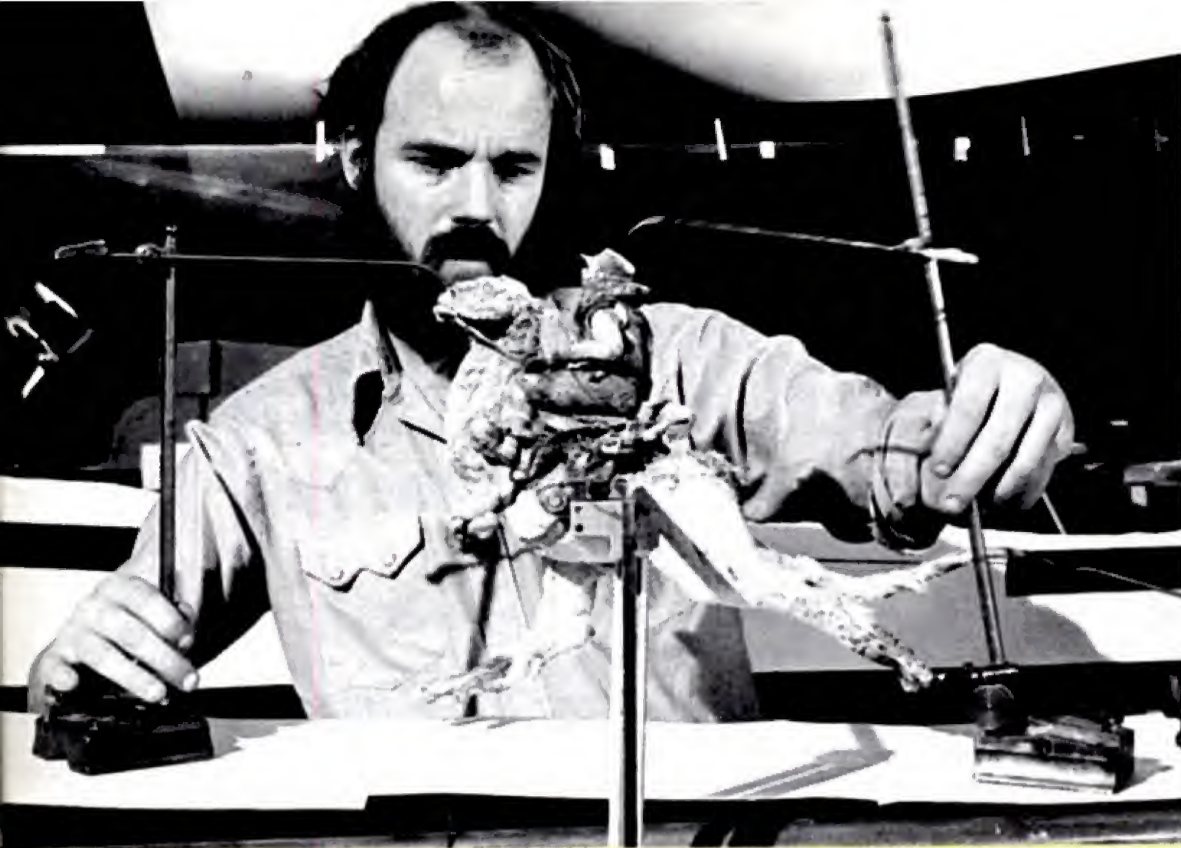


George Lucas directs Greedo for the post-production Cantina effects filming, with makeups devised by Rick Baker. Said Phil Tippett, looking back, "STAR WARS was a big break for all of us."



had learned in his garage to practical use, as well as the chance to experiment with new techniques. "We had a lot of historical learning, about how things had been done in the past," related Tippett, "but not a lot of hands on experience. A great deal of the success for STAR WARS effects can be attributed to our being very hungry. Nobody had done a movie like this, and at the time there were no VCRs, so you didn't have easy access to older films to look at and study. We were a sort of transitional group of people, breaking away from the way Hollywood used to work. Everyone was very committed to their work, and as new practitioners of the craft, we brought a sort of garage mentality with us. It was like guerilla warfare, where we'd put something together using popsicle sticks and baling wire. We didn't have to have every piece of advanced equipment to make something work. It was really very ad hoc. We kind of found our way through it."

Tippett found out about STAR WARS from Richard Edlund, who was looking for effects cameramen. "Richard had heard that I was involved in special effects from an old navy pal of his," related Tippett. "Since I didn't do camerawork, Richard said, 'Why don't you give Dennis Muren a call.' They had hired Dennis, and Dennis hired Ken Ralston. Then, when George needed some inserts for the Cantina sequence, he got a hold of a lot of people, including me, through Rick Baker. We kind of put together a make-shift studio, and produced a lot of the Cantina creatures. While we were doing that, George saw Jon Berg and I were stop-motion animators. I had designed some stop-motion creatures and had taken them to the studio. George saw them and said, 'Can I use some of these?' I



Tippett animates Luke Skywalker astride the Tauntaun in *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, with go-motion rig devised by Dennis Muren visible.

said, 'Sure.' George had this chess game sequence that he planned to do using people in masks, or with makeups. *FUTUREWORLD* had come out and used a similar kind of idea, so he decided to give stop-motion a try. Then, Jon Berg and I built some additional characters to animate. They were just some alien weirdos."

Strangely, most publicity stills of the chess game show the actors looking at an empty table, an oversight that was never corrected. "The still guy wasn't on the set," said Tippett, "since it was quite an afterthought to do the scene. They thought it was just going to be a little throwaway scene, so they never got around to compositing the little creatures into the stills, before they went to publicity. George felt stop-motion would be something different that would help the picture, but it wasn't until *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* that he got involved in stop-motion on a much bigger scale."

Tippett's work on the Cantina creatures was done after principal photography had ended, and Lucas felt the sequence needed more monsters. Lucas pleaded with Fox for additional funds to shoot a second unit, and eventually Fox came up with more money, but only \$20,000. "They didn't have enough money to pay us," said Tippett. "We said, 'Okay, then we'll keep all the stuff we make.' We all split it up, the masks and creatures, that was part of the deal. They also had this studio guy who was hanging around the whole time,

making sure we weren't goofing off. It might have been an insurance thing, because Stuart Freeborn had gotten ill, which is why they needed these additional inserts for the Cantina sequence. The studio didn't have any idea of what George was making, so they were watching him very intently. I remember being at ILM, the day they announced over the intercom they had spent a million dollars on the effects. At the time, it was just amazing to everybody that a million dollars had been spent on the visual effects of a movie."

If Fox President Alan Ladd had pulled the plug on *STAR WARS*, instead of giving his support to Lucas's visionary creation, the whole future of effects and science-fiction "would have been very different," noted Tippett. "It's very rare to have an experience like *STAR WARS*. We were very lucky to be a part of it. Once every ten years or so, you luck into something that good. I was very aware of the screenplay, and Dennis and I were in wonder of how it would all come together. How would it be possible to make anything that was so complicated? It was very funny how the script read, especially the last act. At the cast and crew screening, which was somewhere in Westwood, I couldn't believe it. Prior to the screening, George had run the sequences of the Cantina and the chess game for us, so we could tell from that it was going to be everything we always wanted to see, and of course, we weren't disappointed." □

MASTERING THE CRAFT

"I think JEDI represents the most complex effects effort that may ever be done," said Edlund. "It took eight years to get to that. By the time we got to JEDI we were pretty hot."

How would it have looked if this model had been rigged and exploded?

"You'd have 4x8 lengths of plywood flying through the air," he pointed out, "and that's pretty easy to recognize along with pieces of phone pole flyin' through the air. It would have taken three weeks to rig it so you could blow it up and get rid of it."

And once rid of it? "The odds of getting a good shot out of it were pretty slim," said Morris.

The six-foot miniature model was not built like a pole barn and Morris was able to obliterate it with more style. "It was made out of a special plastic that I've worked out so that it goes away rather steadily," he said. "There were six explosions in that little barge so that it would go away not in just one frame but in a long cut that they needed. Again we filmed it at about 300 frames per second. That was a take one."

Edlund had this to say about the culminating episode of the *STAR WARS* trilogy: "I think that JEDI represents the most complex and exuberant effects effort that may ever be done," he stated in retrospect. "It entailed the work of a large group of people over a period of eight

years. It took eight years to get to that...so by the time we got to JEDI we were pretty hot."

The fantasy effects were acclaimed by the awaiting public to be realistic and exciting, a major factor of the film's success. "Astronaut Buzz Aldrin was in here," Edlund remarked, "and said he was just nailed to the seat."

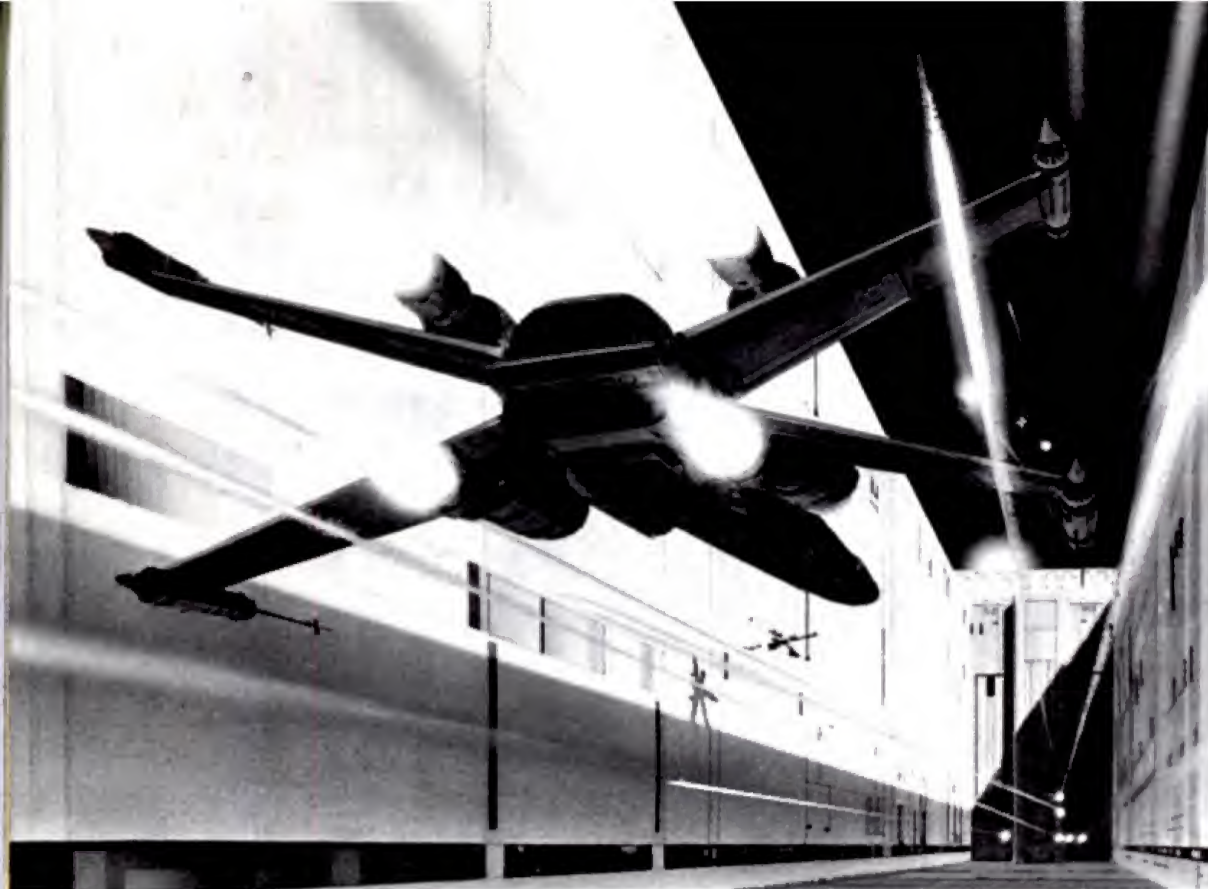
Along with everyone else.

It would seem, then, that all should be sweetness, light, and good vibes at the far-from-(shudder) Hollywood outpost called Industrial Light and Magic. The crowning achievement of the greatest visual effects film of all times should naturally engender an environment of creative nirvana. After all, didn't George Lucas leave Hollywood to spurn the stiflers of creativity, the destructive factionalism, and blatant insiderism? After his work on *RETURN OF THE JEDI* was completed, Edlund migrated south; he had reasons.

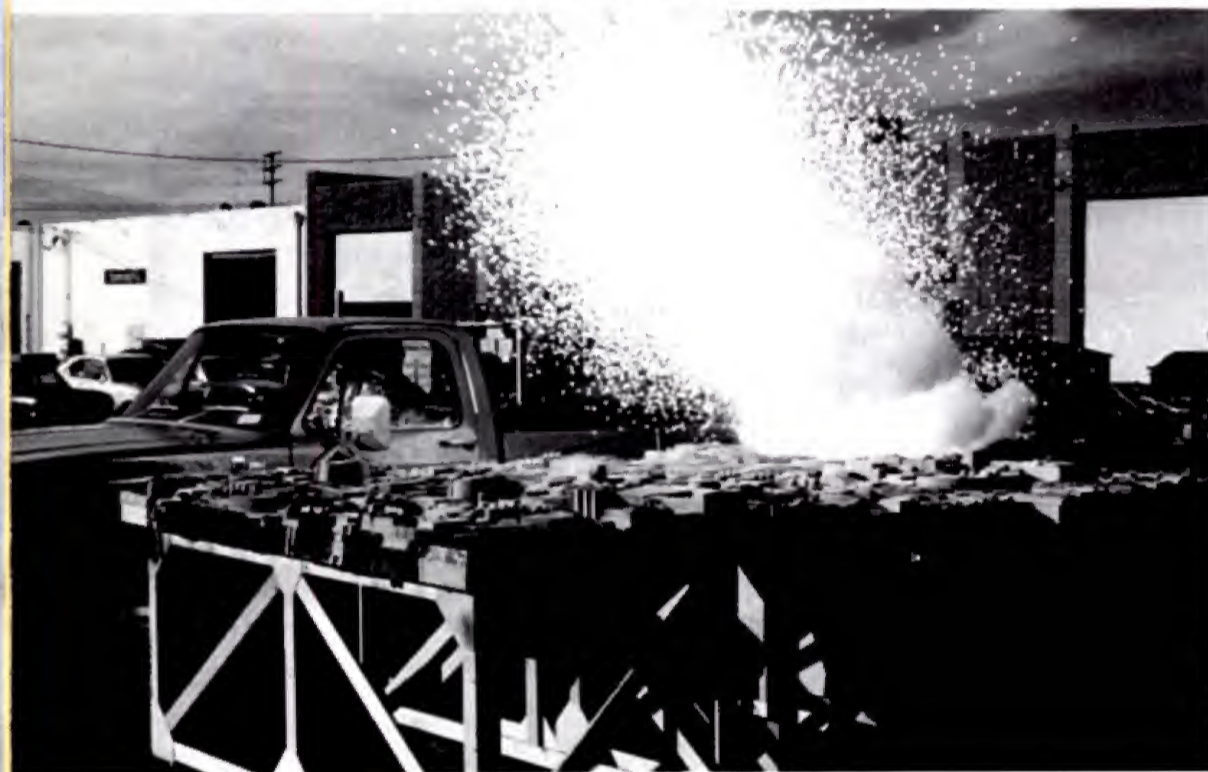
"The difference between ILM and here [Boss Film] is pretty significant," he said. "STAR WARS was really a great project. I really enjoyed it. There was a lot of invention going on, a lot of first-time things. It was very exciting. I had the feeling that STAR

Edlund with (l to r) model maker Ease Owyung, chief modelmaker Lorne Peterson and director Irvin Kershner, with Bobba Fett's ship for *EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*.





Top: Ralph McQuarrie's preproduction concept of the Death Star Trench. Edlund films Death Star Trench explosions high speed from a moving pick-up truck.



IT WASN'T FUN ANYMORE

“By the time JEDI came around there was a lot of ‘politics’ and ‘turf,’” said Edlund. “People staked out their turf. It was a ‘mill town.’ You either worked at the mill or you didn’t have a job.”

and it generally tends to happen in Los Angeles. I’ve come and gone from L.A. several times and every time I’ve come back things have opened up for me.”

During Edlund’s long fade-out at ILM, he capitalized on a timely offer from old pal Doug Trumbull and, on the heels of two aborted film effects deals that fell through, pulled together two more that enabled him to set up shop in L.A.

Noted Edlund, “I was not a Marin County kind of guy—it’s too laid back up there, sort of like the Foreign Legion. I’ve used that line before, but it is. Being back in L.A. was much more vibrant. There’s more things going on and I could control my own destiny. I didn’t have to be taking whatever happened to come in the door and, by and large, we’ve been able to do that.”

An earlier meeting at ILM introduced Edlund to an intriguing effects project that destiny would deny him not once but twice. “I met with Rafaella De-Laurentiis on DUNE while I was still up there [at ILM]. We came down here and talked to her about it and decided to pass on it because we were doing RETURN OF THE JEDI. Nonetheless, my deal with myself was to complete the Trilogy

and come back to L.A. somehow, and I didn’t know exactly how it was going to be done, but that’s what was in my mind.”

Then came the chance meeting with Trumbull who was looking to negotiate for an operating partner to run his Entertainment Effects Group’s 65mm optical house a mile or two south of Venice Beach, California.

“I met with Doug Trumbull at a Women In Film Conference,” Edlund recalled. “I came down here to speak at a panel and Doug told me at that time that he really wanted to get out of the effects business and work on Showscan and would I want to take over the facility? He wanted nothing to do with it, he’d be a completely silent partner and I said that’s exactly what I wanted to hear. So I said, ‘Yeah, let’s talk,’ but I couldn’t talk with him comfortably because there was some attorney sitting on the other side who was trying to get me as a client and I didn’t want her to know too much about what was going on. She’s trying to hit on me on one side and Doug is tellin’ me this thing on the other and we’re sittin’ there. I called Doug back and had a meeting with him and said that I was

WARS was going to be a *biiiiig* movie. I always knew that. We wanted to unseat ‘The Shark’ because JAWS was like Number 1. And we did. And EMPIRE STRIKES BACK also had that same kind of feeling.

“Sort of in the middle of RAIDERS things started changing and I started seeing the handwriting on the wall,” Edlund continued. “I made a deal with myself that I was going to finish the Trilogy and in the meantime I did RAIDERS and POLTERGEIST—both of which were very fulfilling projects. But JEDI was not very much fun...”

Edlund’s words are indeed an amazing and candid revelation and were widely supported and verified by other L.A.-area ILM emigres who experienced the same downer. “By the time JEDI came around,” Edlund recalled, “there was a lot of ‘politics’ and ‘turf.’ People were kind of staking out their turf and

it was a ‘mill town’ kind of situation. You either worked at the mill or you didn’t have a job. When you have that kind of psychology behind the whole thing, it tends to automatically change the attitude of people.

“I was responsible for designing a great deal of that stuff up there and basically architected the system,” said Edlund. “So I knew I could do that again. But there were other people who knew that there was no other way to get a job like this unless there was all this stuff to work with. So they felt captured by it, I think. And since they felt that way and they had bought houses and so on, it was natural that they wanted to really kind of protect their area. It just became very...kind of strange.

“As soon as JEDI had finished,” Edlund said, “I just kind of faded out.

“I’m a real believer in luck,” confessed Edlund. “Lady Luck has smiled on me several times

Edlund shows off ILM's Quad printer in the optical dept. to director Kershner and visual effects co-supervisor Brian Johnson on EMPIRE STRIKES BACK.





Above: On an effects stage at ILM, Doug Beswick, Jon Berg, and Phil Tippett animate the Snow Walkers of *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. Face masks were used to prevent inhaling the baking soda snow. Below: Edlund films a high speed shot of a large Snow Walker foot crushing Luke's speeder.

very interested in doing this, we'll talk further about it. I finished *JEDI* and there was this project and that project, and I was just kind of making a dissolve out of there. I never really gave anybody notice up there, I just started packing up and everybody just kind of realized I was leaving."

Ironically, the *DUNE* effects project—its production schedule having been pushed back—was one of the first projects Edlund considered to launch his Boss Film Corporation. "First of all, I was talking with Doug about doing *DUNE* and they had already done a budget on this," said Edlund. "I read the script and I thought *hmmm...* but it was a big project and I liked Rafaela, so we talked about doing that one for awhile but then that one went away."

Another major effects project then came Edlund's way and it was thought that perhaps this would be his inaugural solo effort. "Then all of a sudden Rid-

ley Scott started getting involved," he recalled. "I was flying down to L.A. on the weekends and talking with Ridley about how we were gonna do *LEGEND* which was gonna be shot at Fox. We were planning on using a sort of a Darby O'Gill approach to a lot of the material—at the time he was going to cast Mickey Rooney as the lead leprechaun. So *LEGEND* shifted gears completely.

"We were starting to board the stuff and I was trying to get budgets together and get a handle on what it was gonna cost to do it—at this facility here in Los Angeles. Then one day producer Arnon Milchan just put his foot down and said, 'No, the budget's too high. We're not gonna put any effects in it and we're gonna shoot it in Italy.' I'd already struck a deal with 'em and all that stuff was set up. Anyway the picture fell out in one phone call and I thought, 'Oh damn, well...' I'd already started getting my feet wet in that whole deal-making process of Hollywood."



Edlund was philosophical about these tandem disappointments. "You have to pay your dues and I just considered that dues paying," he figured. "So I went back up to Marin. During this time I had a backache really bad—a herniated disk. Right after this picture with Ridley fell out I went into the hospital to have my disk repaired. While I was sitting in the hospital waiting for this operation I got a call

from Ivan Reitman—*GHOSTBUSTERS*—he wanted to send me a script. I'm sitting in the Ross Valley Hospital reading *GHOSTBUSTERS* and a day and a half later or earlier, I can't remember which, I had also heard from Peter Hyams who said, 'Let's make 2010—we've got a big budget, it's a big movie for MGM.' So all of a sudden I have two great big projects under my arm again so

didn't even have time to get depressed. As soon as I got out of the hospital I was back down in L.A. making deals and assembling the crew."

Edlund's fade-out was not strictly a solo act—a significant number of key ILM creative personnel faded south with him. "You see, I had done a lot of recruiting before I even moved up to Marin," he pointed out. "Sure, there was Black Thursday or whatever it was when I left and all these guys walked in and said, 'See ya. I'm leavin.'" In other words, they left based on the fact that I had these deals for them. But the thing is that when I moved up to Marin I had basically hired a lot of these people and we were a group that worked together up north and it was a great group. Various people who went up there came back with me.

"I had a long talk with George Lucas when I left and he knew that something like this was going to happen, in fact he even said, 'Some of the best people are gonna leave.' He's a very brilliant guy. He sees what's going on and certainly it was a shock, but at the same time—it wasn't. He rode herd pretty hard."

The dual deals to produce effects for both *GHOST-BUSTERS* and 2010 did not just crawl into Edlund's lap—a

continued on page 36

Edlund & pyrotechnician Joe Viskocil work on a high speed explosion for *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*.



STAR RETURN OF THE JEDI WARS

PHIL TIPPETT ON CREATURE EFFECTS

ILM's Monster Shop supervisor on the challenging saga's menagerie of aliens.

By Lawrence French

Six months before *RETURN OF THE JEDI* began production, Phil Tippett and his crew began designing and building the incredible menagerie of alien creatures that would be required for the film. Among Tippett's many creations were Admiral Ackbar, Jabba the Hut, organ player Max Rebo, singer Sy Snootles and the Rancor pit monster. The Rancor was initially designed to be shot using a man in a suit, allowing the sequence to be filmed in real time. "An entire large Rancor cave was constructed," recalled Tippett, "but it didn't work so we abandoned that idea. One of the reasons directors try to do things full-scale, is because it makes it more fun for them. They can see shots right away, rather than shooting a lot of background plates and having to wait weeks till it's all put together."

Searching for a new way to bring the Rancor to life, go-motion appeared to be the next obvious solution. Go-motion had been developed by Tippett and effects supervisor Dennis Muren for the realistic effects used in *DRAGONSLAYER*. However, Muren wanted to try something different. "Go-motion is very

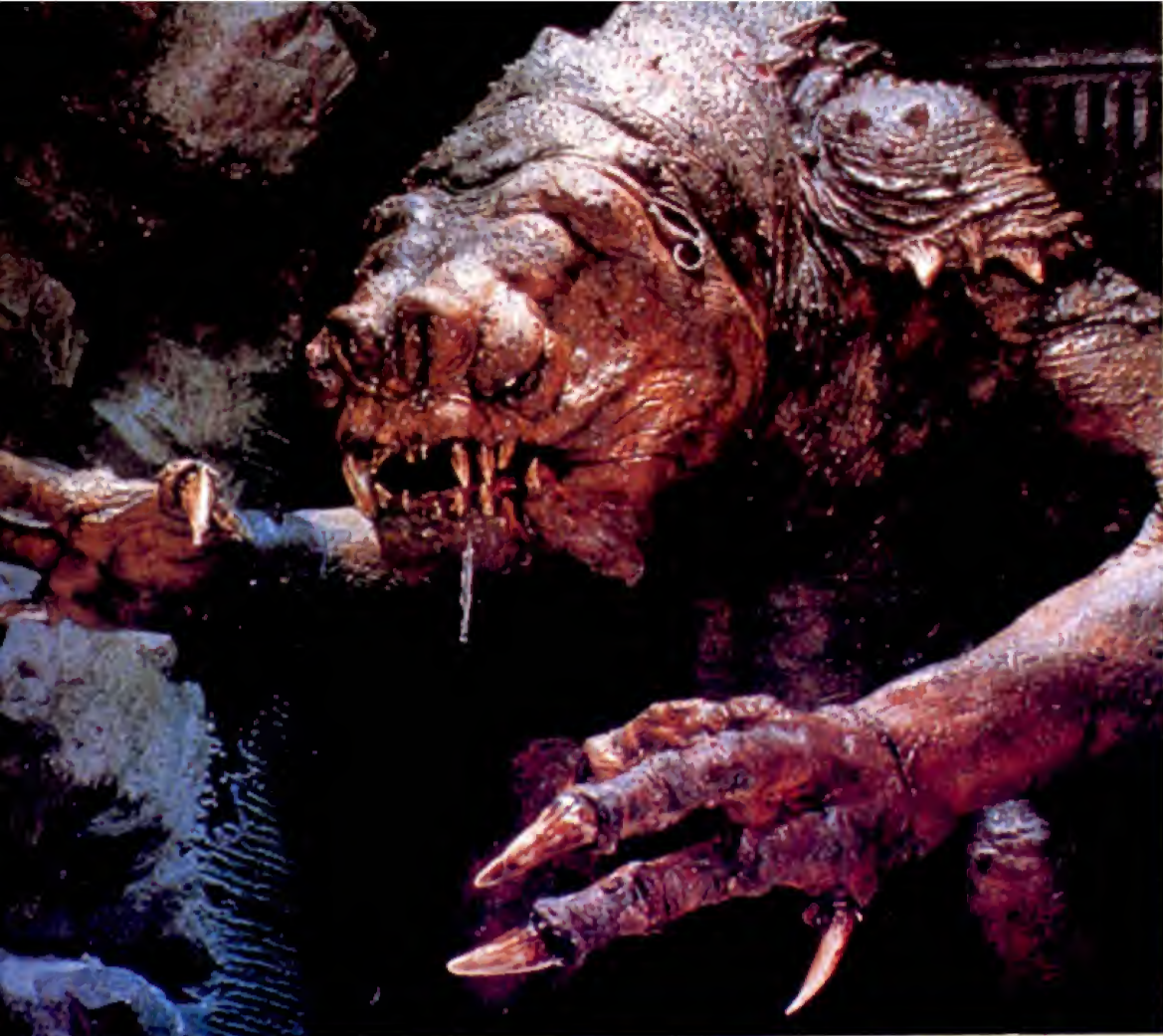


Monster Shop supervisor Phil Tippett puts finishing touches on an alien in the court of Jabba the Hut for *RETURN OF THE JEDI*.

time consuming and there wasn't the budget for it," maintained Muren. "Something we said after doing *DRAGONSLAYER* was, 'No more go-mo.' We did the *JEDI* chicken walkers with go-motion, but it was very painful to do it that way. Programming the major moves into the computer was very time consuming. So for the Rancor, we came up with another approach: a combination of muppet and rod puppet. That allowed us to have slime dripping from his mouth and see dust falling off him, which wouldn't be possible if he were animated."

Tippett designed the Rancor model after receiving some interesting comments from George Lucas. "George expressed what he was looking for, as a cross between a bear and a potato," related Tippett. "I don't remember where that came from, but that was his idea, so I started to cook up a maquette along those lines. Joe Johnston and Ralph McQuarrie had already done some designs, but George wanted to add something more."

Eventually Tippett made an 18-inch puppet that required three people to operate. "It was a puppet that had a hole in its back," said Tippett. "I put my hand up its back and did the head and mouth movement, while Tom St. Amand operated the arms with rods and Dave Sosalla did the feet. Dennis shot it all in high speed, at 72 frames per second. It was shot on a miniature set, that was lit to match the background plates. They had already shot the live-action, which was just a series of pick-up shots of Mark Hamill against this cave wall. It was put together as a full miniature, and we had to be very careful lighting it, so you didn't see the rods coming out the back of the puppet, or my arm in there, holding the thing up. Dennis had to take great care in balanc-



Tippett's Rancor Pit monster, using stop-motion *a la* Ray Harryhausen after filming of an earlier live-action man-in-a-suit design failed miserably.

ing the lights, to make the Rancor look good. He had to get those little pinpoints of light to reflect exactly in the creature's eyes.

"We collaborated a great deal when we were setting that sequence up. There's a tremendous amount of thought and engineering that was required. It's not just setting up some lights, putting a puppet in there and shooting it. You have to use the right lenses, and the ideal angles, to make it look really big."

Another complication was caused by using high-speed photography to give the puppet the appropriate sense of mass. "It was the antithesis of stop-motion animation," noted Tippett. "If your shooting at 72 fps, you have to think three times

faster than normal, while in stop-motion you have to go into a Zen time, to fabricate a performance. Coordinating all the moves together got to be really tricky. We had to move very quickly to give the puppet a decent sense of weight and scale."

Shooting in high speed also meant a great deal of rehearsal, to get the best possible performance from the puppet. "We'd go as high as 70 or 80 takes to get the movements worked out," revealed Tippett. "We shot it in reverse and did all kinds of things so it didn't look like a rod puppet."

For the Imperial Scout Walkers, Tippett employed go-motion, which was combined with hand animation. "We got the basic walk cycle worked out and programmed it into the comput-

PHIL TIPPETT

"A lot of us really communicated a great deal by telepathy. We came from the same heritage, and grew up on the same kinds of movies, and as a result we really knew what was required."

er," said Tippett. "Then, we could use that throughout the picture. Go-motion would animate all the major moves, and all the other ancillary animation, anywhere from 10 to 50 percent, would be done by hand. It just depended on the shot."

For the sequence where the Ewoks disable a Scout Walker with a log slide, Dennis Muren photographed a quarter-scale miniature set. Tippett then figured out the basic timings of where the Scout Walker's feet would go, after getting tripped up by the rolling logs. "After the background plate was shot," remarked Tippett, "we set up a blue screen stage, and lit the Walker to match the background plate. I plotted the Walker into the shot, and timed the animation to all the action that was going on in the background plate. It took quite a while to get the nuances to fit together. Walkers were basically mechanically operated, but at a certain point, you want to push it a little and give them some personality, so you can have a little bit more fun."

Tippet designed Jabba the Hut, based on some succinct feedback from George Lucas. "Jabba had already appeared in STAR WARS, although he was cut out," noted Tippett. "George said to make him a big hulky fat guy, like Sidney Greenstreet. The kinds of things George wanted were all pretty clear. He didn't really have to say a great deal to convey the feeling he wanted. A lot of us really communicated a great deal by telepathy. We came from the same heritage, and grew up on the same kinds of movies, and as a result we really knew what was required. I think in some ways it came from all of us being starved for this kind of genre, that we had all remembered—the FLASH GORDON serials and the Ray Harryhausen

movies. We were all trying to do our own versions of those things, and trying really hard to make them look good.

"For Jabba I came up with a snaky-sluggy, two-armed thing, that was built and performed over in England. Stuart Freeborn constructed Jabba so he could be puppeteered after the design was locked down. I had designed some other things that were more complicated to make, but this was the Jabba design that George wanted to use."

As creature supervisor, Tippett was more involved with generating performances through animation and puppetry, than using optical effects. "At my level you'd simply stop shooting when you felt you had a decent performance," explained Tippett. "They had to make sure the backgrounds matched the foregrounds, and everything fit together without matte lines showing. I was usually on the set shooting when those kind of decisions were being made. For me, I'd shoot it, and there it was. You got it all in the camera on the first take. Or the fiftieth." □

Tippett's animation of a Scout Walker, about to be demolished by swinging tree trunks in RETURN OF THE JEDI.



Carrie Fisher as Princess Leia, a dancing girl at the mercy of Tippett's animatronic Jabba the Hut, built by Stuart Freeborn in England.



STAR THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK WARS

THE MATTE WORK OF HARRISON ELLENSHAW

Matte painter extraordinaire was lured by STAR WARS' great challenge.

By Frederick C. Szebin

With the proliferation of CGI encompassing all of filmmaking—creating anything from computer-generated actors to entire cityscapes—it becomes increasingly important to remember the contributions of cinematic artists who plied their trade and created movie memories before the bytes bit into their craft.

One such artisan is Pennsylvania-born Harrison Ellenshaw, son of Peter Ellenshaw whose matte painting graced such SF classics as TWENTY THOUSAND LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA, who is a matte painter extraordinaire in his own right. With as little as a plate of

glass, a paint brush and a discerning eye, Ellenshaw brought additional scope to such films as PETE'S DRAGON, THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH, STAR WARS and THE BLACK HOLE by supplying matte work that, when composited with the filmed image, turned a movie set into the plummeting depths of a Death Star, or recreated the bygone eras of cities long-since changed by 20th Century encroachment. Audiences get to view his work again on grand scales when 20th Century-Fox re-releases THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK February 21.

Although much of his work has been featured in science fiction films, Ellenshaw professed no intrinsic love of the genre. "I

love film, you understand, but I don't even like science fiction," he stated. "I never have. I hope that doesn't set off any heart attacks. What got me interested in STAR WARS was Ralph McQuarrie's pre-production paintings. It just hit me as a great challenge, to be able to pull off these illusions. But science fiction is certainly not my first, second, third or even fourth love."

Ellenshaw had come off of Disney's mammoth effects extravaganza THE BLACK HOLE with its moving mattes achieved through Disney's own Matte Scan system, when George Lucas beckoned for his assistance on the equally huge EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. Approximately 13 mattes had been



Hans Solo's Millennium Falcon lands on the planet Dagobah. Matte painting by Ralph McQuarrie.

made for STAR WARS, but EMPIRE required 60 to 70, lowered from the original 80 paintings that Ellenshaw and his crew were originally shooting for.

"In many ways, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK was a whole different ball game for me," said Ellenshaw. "The mattes were important in this picture, but they're not quite as integral as they were in THE BLACK HOLE. The moves in our EMPIRE mattes, though, were still motion controlled. There were some tilts and pans off the front projection unit. We used no push-ins or pull-backs, though. Moves involving front

Matte painting supervisor Harrison Ellenshaw paints a matte of the Dagobah swamp from THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK. Below: The camera pans on Ellenshaw's painting as an alien bird optically glides by.



HARRISON ELLENSHAW

“It was a little difficult for me to keep the juices pumping. And I kind of wish that I had the preparation period that I would have liked for this picture.”

with the live action. The main benefit in this method is a better-quality image with less grain than traditional matte-composite methods.

Coming onto *EMPIRE* during post-production, as opposed to being involved with the development of the film's look all the way through, proved a bit difficult for Ellenshaw, whose schedule of back-to-back space

was that if anybody was really going to examine matte shots, then it was going to be in this show. On *STAR WARS*, I had so few shots...I was very pleased with the way they'd been filmed. Incidentally, *EMPIRE* and *STAR WARS* are the only two pictures I've ever worked on where somebody else shot the plates and I came in afterwards on the project. And although I had my reservations, generally I've been very pleased with these shots.

“But I don't want to reflect badly on the plates that were shot for *EMPIRE*,” Ellenshaw cautioned. “Of course, you always want them shot your way. See, I inherited two shots with jiggles, and we had a few shots that had problems concerning the back plates of the first-unit cameras. As a result, those were out of focus. Those are the kinds of things that give you the screaming meemies, although it really wasn't directly anyone's fault.

“What would happen is that the first unit people would know that a shot was slightly out of focus, but they were under pressure to get on to the next set-up. And you can't redo it later because that set was

Cloud city of Bespin and a delegation headed by Lando Calrissian comes out to meet him. Right: Matte cameraman Neil Kreppia combines the painting with the live action.

projection are very simple; you just move the camera around a nodal point. We hooked up two Slauson motors to a sine drive and then we were able to get that pan and tilt. But, really, I'm at a loss here. When it comes to electronics, I know very little.

“One of the front projection moves that occurs on an *EMPIRE* matte was where the Millennium Falcon arrives at Cloud City—some of our heroes are on board, and the people in Bespin come out to greet them on this ramp,” Ellenshaw continued. “We panned down on that matte, with our heroes on that ramp. It's a very sly, slight move. That

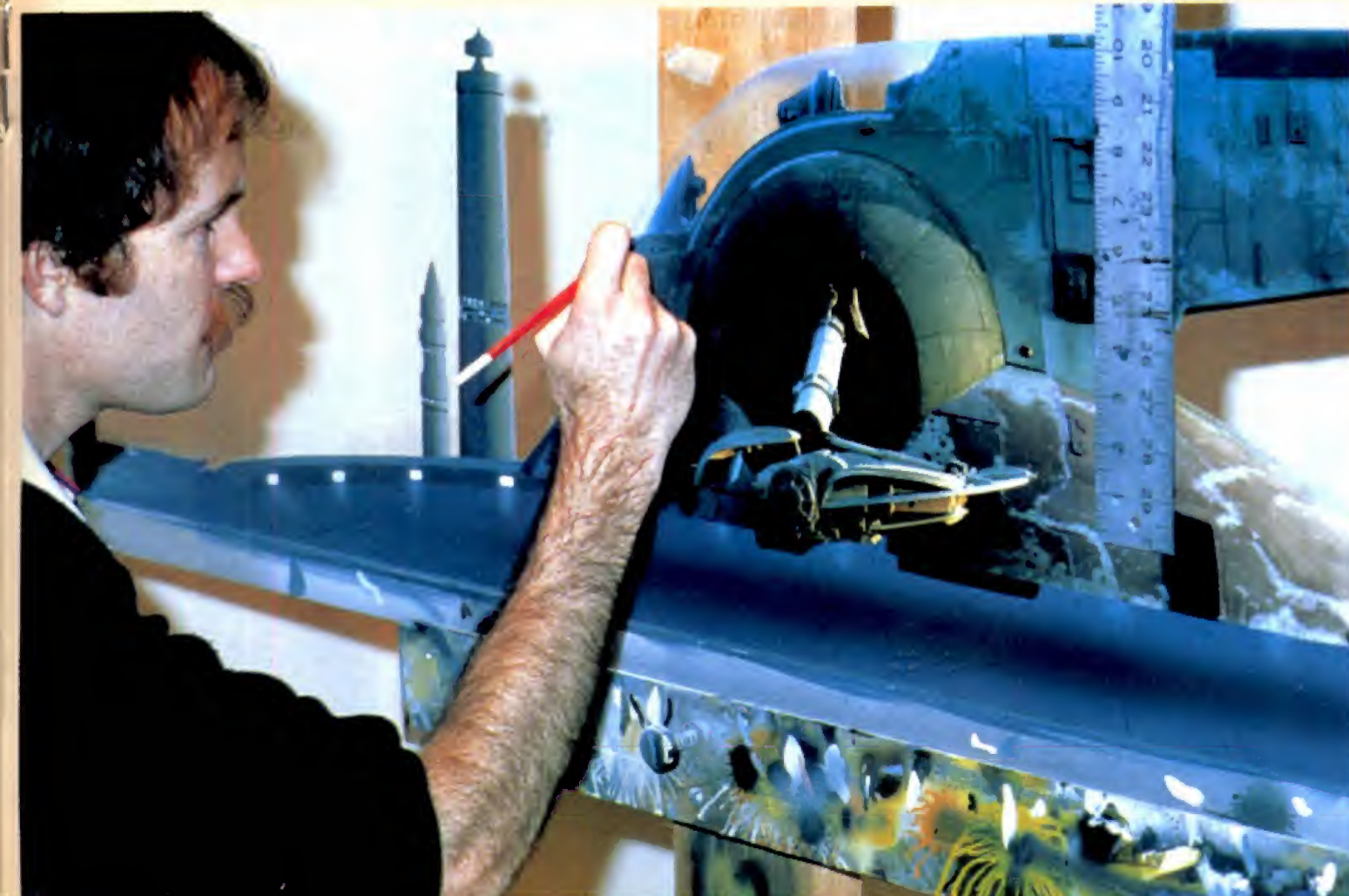
ramp shot took a good deal of pre-planning and careful shooting of the plates to get it together. I came in on *EMPIRE* during post-production. Everything had already been shot, so I was a slave to what had gone before. Anyway, most of our moves are slight. There's not a real grabber in *EMPIRE* like the Entrance to the Observatory shot I did for *THE BLACK HOLE*, mainly because the story is different.”

The mattes were handled a bit differently on *EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* than on previous films; 4x5 transparencies were taken of the paintings, which were then composited



epics began to wear on the artist.

“I came off *THE BLACK HOLE* on a Friday and started work on *EMPIRE* the following Monday,” Ellenshaw recalled. “It was a little difficult for me to keep the juices pumping. And I kind of wish that I had the preparation period that I would have liked for this picture. One thought that kept constantly hanging in the back of my mind



Ellenshaw paints a matte of bounty hunter Bobba Fett's ship on the Cloud City landing platform. Below: The final composite as Fett loads Solo's inert body, encased in a block of carbonite.





The large Dagobah set at Pinewood Studios housed Luke's downed ship, but needed Ellenshaw's mattes to give it scope.

struck. I can see how all these things happen in production. It was probably a little easier to fudge something when there wasn't anybody there to say, 'Hey, wait a minute.' So, a great deal of our time was taken in trying to make shots as good as possible, and in the process maybe starting a little further back on things than we might have. You know how it is—you suddenly find yourself on square minus two instead of square one. As a result of all this, I kind of regret that I didn't really have the time to pause, look at each shot and say, 'Gee, how is this going to be as good as absolutely possible?'"

Ellenshaw feels such problems were corrected very well, considering the added fact that

they were using a new front projection matte system that had just been built in late 1979 and early 1980. The artist and his crew found themselves in the unenviable position of having to do testing, research, development and final effects all at the same time. "It was difficult to take a deep breath at any one point on this project," he added.

The system used on EMPIRE was similar to Disney's Matte Scan except for a few differences. Unlike Matte Scan, the system used for EMPIRE had the front projector linked directly to the camera. If you were to move in on a shot, the projected image would change, getting larger or smaller.

Among his crew on EMPIRE was Mike Pangrazio, who

worked primarily on stop-motion backings and the planets. Also involved was conceptual artist Ralph McQuarrie who, Ellenshaw said, was a tremendous help. "Without Ralph," he noted, "I would have been in a hospital somewhere, mumbling to myself."

"While we were trying to determine how best to set up the equipment during the research and development period, I was very concerned with getting those shots that would be put together composited downstairs at ILM's Optical department—in getting those done so that Optical wouldn't have to wait for us when it came time to end the picture. That's kind of difficult because you're usually painting right up to the last minute and

you can't test it; you just paint up to the wire and then shoot it downstairs. You then don't see the matte and action plate together for another two months.

"What was going on was I was concentrating heavily on the composites as well as getting the equipment in good shape, while Ralph concentrated on doing fairly extensive matte paintings of the things he was familiar with, like Cloud City. Ralph originally designed Cloud City for STAR WARS, but they didn't use it. They liked it so much, though, that they used it in EMPIRE. So, Ralph worked on these familiar things. He could just come in and paint on them for a solid week and not really have to be taken away from them, not have to worry about touching up something here or worrying about how the sinex worked out the day before. This took a lot of strain off him, since Ralph didn't have any previous background in mattes. He did some work in STAR WARS, but those were basically straight paintings, nothing with composite plates."

McQuarrie's contribution to EMPIRE beyond his initial design work was substantial. Overall, he did 20 to 25 paintings, including helping Ellenshaw on his own work as the supervisor. Working on 10 to 20 mattes at a time, Ellenshaw would constantly be called away on other matters.

Among the planet mattes contributed by Ellenshaw's team were two for Yoda's Bog planet, and for the snow planet Hoth, some work was done for the ice

Right: Concept artist-turned-matte painter Ralph McQuarrie puts the finishing touches on the matte of Cloud City. Below: Matte cameraman Neil Krepela checks the line-up on McQuarrie's work-in-progress, filming at ILM.



planet as well as a matte for the Rebel's power generator, which the artist and his team thought looked like "four Michelin tires stuck in the snow."

Ellenshaw thought the most spectacular mattes were done for Cloud City, particularly the exteriors. Visual impact is added due to the fact that most of the sequence takes place at dusk or after sunset, giving a warm glow to the action.

The matte team had a particularly hectic production schedule for *EMPIRE*. Ellenshaw became involved in October, 1979 and worked through March, 1980 to get the film ready for its May release. It can take from 40 to 50 man-hours to complete a matte, and Ellenshaw and his people were working six and seven days a week, while doing research and development on their new matte system, in addition to trying to determine how each shot was going to be done—should contrast plates be used? Separation masters? If so, to what exposures? All these decisions had to be made quickly to create the most effective mattes possible, and Ellenshaw kept himself busy running from one concern to the next.

Timing was another problem that added a little extra to Ellenshaw's workload. While George Lucas was following up his smash space fantasy at Elstree Studios in England, Stanley Kubrick was filming his troubled production of Stephen King's *THE SHINING* at the same time. Fire destroyed Kubrick's set and Elstree executives cut back on set space, a move that necessitated Darth Vader having a smaller bridge on his Star Destroyer than would benefit his evilness. To overcome this, Ellenshaw and his crew matted-in a bigger bridge. The left side of the set was flopped onto the right, and a matte was made of the bridge and part of the floor to literally make it twice as big as it really was.

"All the shots on *EMPIRE* were very, very different," said Ellenshaw. "Nothing at all like the first show or, for that matter, *THE BLACK HOLE*. I've never done shots quite like this before, not only from a design standpoint, but also from the intrinsic degree of uniqueness. I

HARRISON ELLENSHAW

"George [Lucas] was concerned with this film because he didn't want it to be treated as a sequel. He wanted it as unique, fresh-looking and as different as *STAR WARS* was."



Top: Darth Vader (David Prowse) traps Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) during climactic lightsaber duel. Bottom: Ellenshaw noted Lucas rarely showed up on the Pinewood sets of *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, seen with (l to r) director Irvin Kershner, producer Gary Kurtz, screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan, during filming.



think that reflects right back to George and Ralph. George was concerned with this film because he didn't want it to be treated as a sequel. He wanted to make it as unique, fresh-looking and as different as *STAR WARS* was. As a result, *EMPIRE* was like working on another film, not at all like working on *STAR WARS*."

Not only were comparisons with *STAR WARS* inevitable, but so were comparisons between directors Lucas and Irvin Kershner. "I didn't see much of Kershner," said Ellenshaw. "George let him direct the picture as Kersh saw fit, and then, when he was finished with

shooting, Lucas certainly took Kershner's suggestions on the cutting and those kinds of things. But after that it was really George's baby. George probably enjoys editing more than anything else. During the six months I was at ILM, George was also there every day he could be, whenever he wasn't in LA somewhere. So really, in that respect, *EMPIRE* was like the first picture. I was working for George.

"I think George was far more relaxed this time around," Ellenshaw continued. "He had the desire and intensity to make *EMPIRE* as absolutely perfect as possible. He also seemed to

be a bit more trusting of everyone's abilities. He was accepting of suggestions, and if you wanted to do something a little different, fine. Give it a try. No big deal. But by the same token he kept enthusiasm up, which is really nice. George kept us pumped up enough that we all tried to do our best work."

Another, often overlooked, contributor to the *STAR WARS* mythos is producer Gary Kurtz, whose later productions, such as *THE DARK CRYSTAL*, certainly failed to make the waves his Lucas pairings did. But Ellenshaw ensures that Kurtz was crucial to *EMPIRE*'s overall success as an effective cinematic adventure.

"Gary was a big help," Ellenshaw said. "He had the experience of the first show behind him. He was sort of the common denominator that linked *EMPIRE* and *STAR WARS* together. When *EMPIRE* was shooting in England, Gary kept this thread running through the entire production. George wasn't really in England all that much during *EMPIRE*. He was very involved in post-production. But Kurtz was also a tremendous boost. He's got this great technical background."

Despite the horrendous schedule and the problems inherent in using untested technology, the mattes in *EMPIRE STRIKES BACK* work exceedingly well, creating a visually stunning film in line with the story's darker tone. Like any artist intimately involved with a finished work, Ellenshaw has mixed feelings about the final showcase of his art.

"I feel two things," he said prior to *EMPIRE*'s release. "First, I feel very good about it, considering the short amount of time we had and some of the problems we had to overcome. I also feel a little hesitant and a little anxious. The bottom line is I wish I could have had some things differently. I wish I'd had a little bit more time, and I wonder if the final product that sits on the screen is as good as it could have been. I don't know if I've got an 85 percent or a 99 percent on my hands." □

Harrison Ellenshaw Interview by Paul M. Sammon.



Top: The rebels fly in to attack the advancing Imperial Snow Walker in the battle for Hoth. Edlund sets up a shot with the large foot of the mechanical behemoth.



great deal of finesse and careful maneuvering were required to close the deals. "I put 'em in bed together," said Edlund, "which was no mean feat.

"One was a summer film and one was a Christmas release," recalled Edlund, "and that was important because you couldn't have two shows cramming through optical at once. We wouldn't be alive; we'd be pushing daisies up!"

Edlund recalled the break-neck deadline pace for *GHOSTBUSTERS*, Boss Film's maiden effort. "This is the only group who could've pulled that off," he stated. "I'm sure of it.

"The fact that we were able to produce *GHOSTBUSTERS* in such a crack time—that was real burnout. We had to give people B12 shots to keep them from sinking to the ground," he remembered. "We had 10 months from the time the lawyers had finished with us." That was precious little time

to produce effects for what would turn out to be the runaway hit of the Olympics summer—later surpassing ILM's *TEMPLE OF DOOM* at the boxoffice.

Edlund's office at Boss Film Corporation is a combination cinematography library, trophy room (including a heavy scattering of Oscars and a miniature commemorative Ark from *RAIDERS OF...*), and rare antique motion picture camera museum. Returning from a last-minute check on some storyboards, Edlund noted a visitor's interest in a vintage Mitchell 35mm movie camera on display

"I paid \$400 for it," he noted matter-of-factly. "I'm a student of Technicolor equipment. I have a three-strip camera also—there's the movement over there."

He pointed to a perfectly re-

ON WATCHING MOVIES

"I don't particularly care for effects movies," said Edlund. "I like to be drawn into a movie. If I start looking at the effects academically, I'm generally bored and disappointed by it."

stored Technicolor film gate mechanism believed to have been used on *GONE WITH THE WIND*—on display under a glass dome. "I could tell that it was a Technicolor job because they'd completely reworked it. It's actually one of the best standard cameras in the world because Technicolor had the best machine shop department in Hollywood history."

Edlund's obsession for constantly developing and modifying optical and photographic equipment has enabled BFC to be a vanguard of new technology. Analogous to the truck bodybuilding business his father ran in Fargo, North Dakota, Edlund refers to the customizing, upgrading, and retooling of the industry's technology as "hot rodding." (Arcane Edlund trivia: In the credits for *GHOSTBUSTERS*, *POLTERGEIST II*, and *BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA*, Edlund's name appears over shots of a customized ambulance, a pickup truck, and Kurt Russell's Workshop Express semi rig.) In 1987 the Motion Picture Academy of Arts and Sciences awarded Edlund's photographic hot-rod shop a Scientific and Engineering award for the design and development of the 65mm

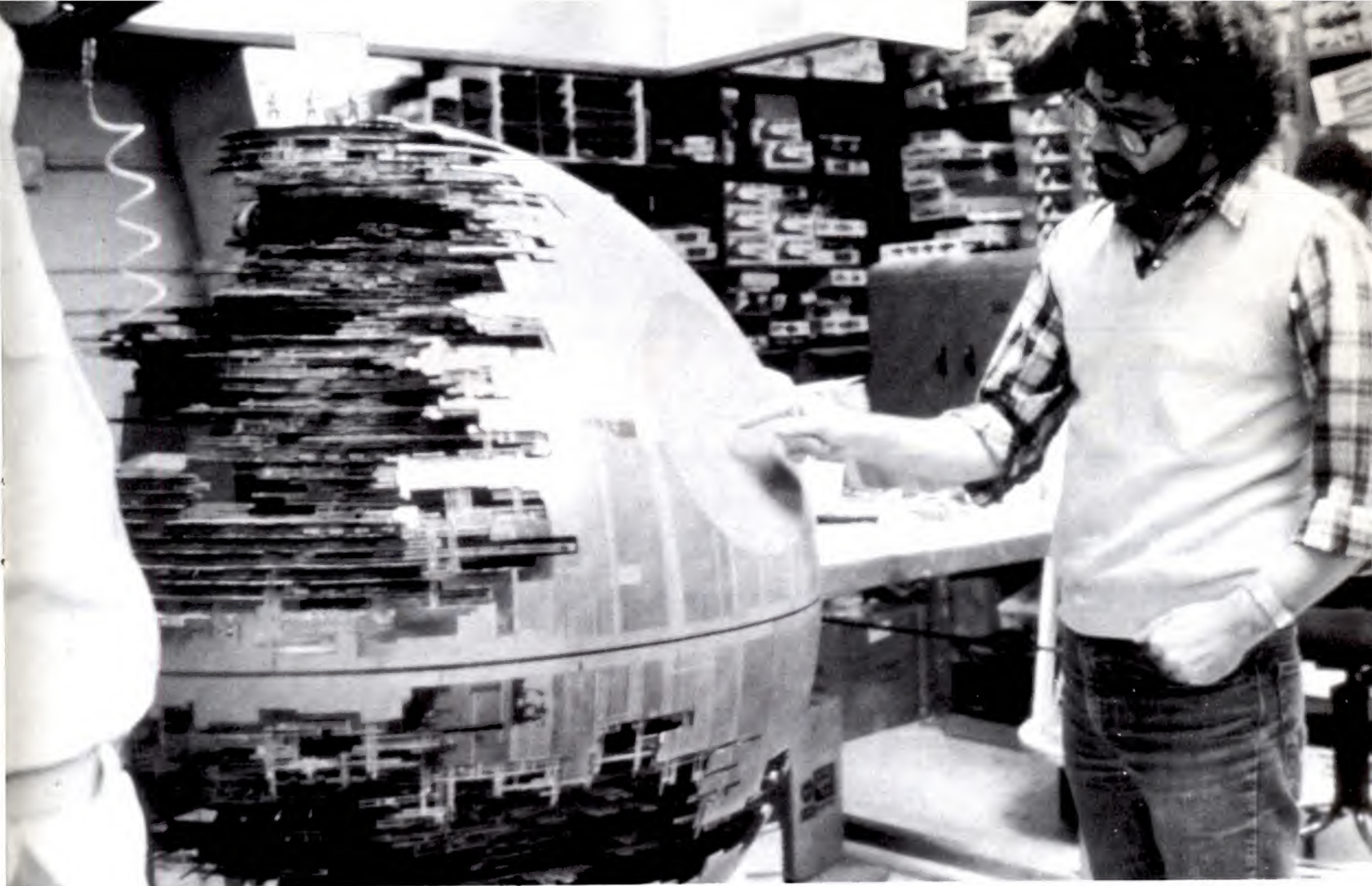
Zoom Optical Printer (ZAP) that can do everything except make coffee. Edlund proudly shared the credit with Boss chief engineer Gene Whiteman ("Gene is the kinda guy who would build the sort of super deuce coupe that could outrun anyone in Van Nuys," laughed Edlund), design engineer Mark West, David Grafton, Jerry Jeffress, and Bob Wilcox.

Edlund's enthusiasm for cinematographic technology was expanded during his first job in Hollywood at Westheimer Optical) where he would pick up the techno half of technocreativity. Joe Westheimer's busy optical house served as an introduction for Edlund—not only to the complexities of special effects photographic technique but also provided the chance to meet some of the legendary Hollywood cameramen.

"While I was working with Joe, I got to work with Hal Mohr [*THE JAZZ SINGER*, *MID-SUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*, *CAPTAIN BLOOD*], Ernie Haller [*GONE WITH THE WIND*], and some of those guys," recalled Edlund. "I met James Wong Howe [*PRISONER OF ZENDA*, *YANKEE DOODLE DANDY*] because they were all friends of Joe's and we used to shoot inserts with these

Edlund formed his own company, Boss Films, in 1984, here working with designs for *POLTERGEIST II*, one of his maiden projects.





Above: George Lucas examines the Death Star model for RETURN OF THE JEDI, Edlund's final project at ILM. Edlund noted of Lucas, "He rode herd pretty hard." Below: JEDI's rebel fleet. Edlund said Lucas was "shocked" to see him quit ILM for greener pastures.

guys so they'd come over and I'd pick up tricks from them."

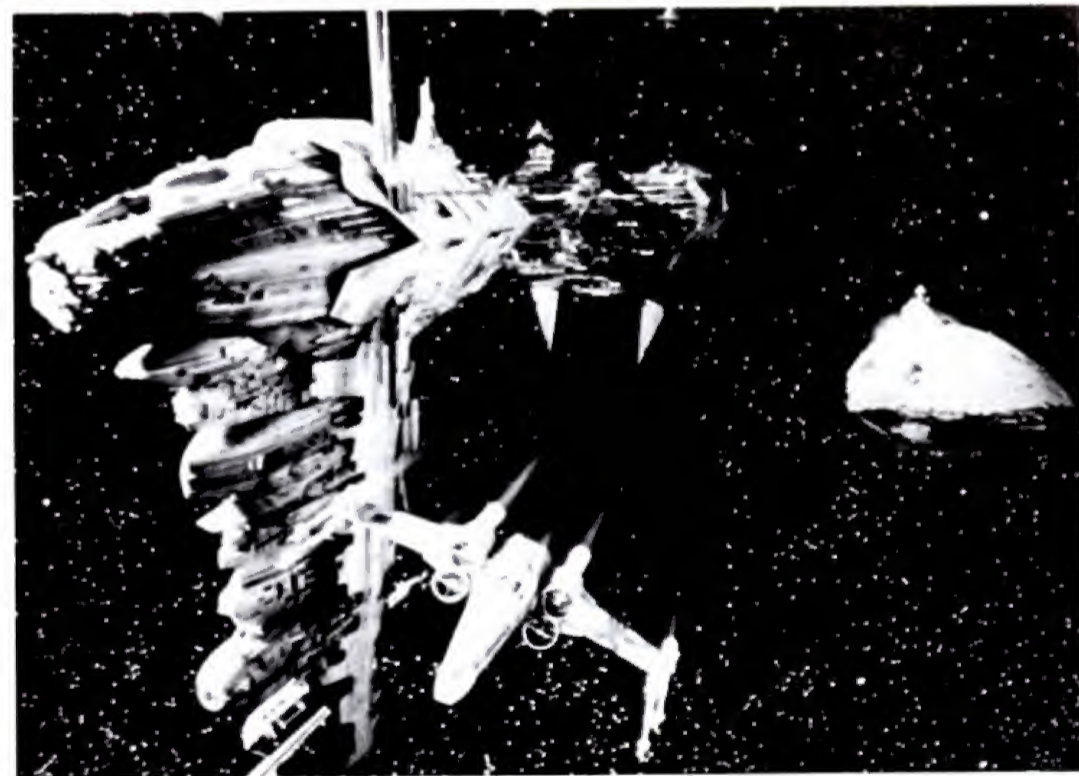
An insert Edlund filmed a number of times was the hand of Thing on television's THE ADDAMS FAMILY. The hand was Edlund's. "Yeah, in a lot of cases it was," he verified. "We were right down the street from General Service Studios where they were shooting that series and so we shot a lot of inserts. Because I happened to be there and because, ya know, I could put the black glove on and come outta the box, I would often set the shots up. I just happened to be there and my hand was about the right size and I was dexterous enough to do the tricks.

"Joe Westheimer is a great guy," Edlund continued. "He taught me a lot of things, not only about photography. He's like a statesman. He's got that quality. People like him. They respect his opinions. He's fair and honest and he's almost like a father to me." Westheimer stated simply about his protege, "He did it all him-

self."

Given his background and penchant for perfection, one would expect Edlund to enjoy attending movie screenings with a penchant to dissect or analyze the effects shots therein. Not so. "I feel kinda bad if I go to a movie and do that," he admitted. "I don't particularly care for effects movies over other movies. I like movies a lot and I like to be drawn into a movie. One of my favorites is RAGING BULL—it has nothing to do with effects. Or TENDER MERCIES, or Japanese samurai films, that kind of thing. If I go to a movie and start looking at the effects academically, I'm generally bored by the movie and so I'm disappointed by it."

Edlund is strongly aware of the relative importance of the special effects shot within the overall scope of a motion picture. "We'd rather have the stuff just drop into the film and become part of the viscera of that film," he said. "To be really successful they have to do



that.

"We did a study and found out that the average length of shot that we've done since our inception in 1983 was about four and 1/3 seconds," said Edlund. "That's the average shot. That means there were a lot of shorter shots than that and a lot of longer ones. In the case of STAR WARS there were few shots that were longer than 120 frames—that's

five seconds. Most shots, on the other hand, were shorter than that."

Edlund has a philosophy which sums up his feelings about the importance of special effects: "The greatest effects in the world are not going to make a turkey a boxoffice smash. On the other hand, a great film which has poor effects in it is going to be very seriously marred by that." □

PETER CUSHING

ON HIS STYLISH VILLAINY IN

STAR WARS

Hammer's Frankenstein veteran breathed life into the universe's ultimate bad-guy.

By Bill Kelley

Peter Cushing, weakened by ill health, granted few interviews in the last years of his life. When he did consent to meet or speak with journalists interested in talking about the career of "the gentleman of horror," the interviews usually centered on the peak period of Cushing's career—the Hammer years.

As a result, STAR WARS is a film about which Cushing appears to have had relatively little to say. Interviewers with limited time to spend with him were more eager to record his memories of HORROR OF DRACULA ('58) or his six outings as Baron Frankenstein for Hammer Films. I first met Cushing in 1975 (a year before he worked on STAR WARS) and interviewed him several times subsequently—usually over the telephone, by transatlantic connection. (In January of 1980, when I described to him the balmy weather around my home in Florida, he replied, with perfect deadpan timing, "I'll just pull myself a little closer to the fire.") My longtime friendship with his frequent co-star and devoted friend, Christopher Lee, helped blaze the trail for a cordial acquaintanceship.

Inevitably, we talked about STAR WARS several times.

"Well, there was nothing extraordinary or unusual about the way I was offered the film," Cushing explained, at first perfunctorily. "George Lucas and his partners offered it to me the same way I am offered every film I appear in. They sent a script and a let-

"So after my entrance," said Cushing, "I performed the whole of STAR WARS as Grand Moff Tarkin wearing a pair of comfortable carpet slippers."



The late Peter Cushing as Governor Tarkin, smiles at Leia's (Carrie Fisher) defiant jab: she asserts that she "detected his foul stench" when she came on board.

ter to my agent, with an offer."

Cushing's agent in 1976 was still John Redway (now deceased), who had represented him as far back as 1956, when he signed for THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN, his first Hammer film. (The London-based Redway also represented Lee for many years.)

"The part, as all STAR WARS fans know, was Grand Moff Tarkin—the bad guy, Darth Vader's boss. Over the years, I've played very few evil and sinister parts. Baron

Frankenstein, however ruthless he may be, isn't evil—but Grand Moff Tarkin certainly is. If I remember correctly I have a scene in which I convince Princess Leia to divulge some information to me, in return for which I'll spare a 'planetoid' or something on which some of the rebel army is hiding. Now you know what's coming. She gives me the information...and I turn calmly and have the planet blown up. Now *that's* a bad guy. I don't play too many of them. But on those rare occasions I play one, I don't try to find some way to get out of playing him as the villain he is.

"The challenge in that scene," Cushing recalled, "was trying to keep the audience from guessing whether I would keep my promise to the Princess, or have the rebels annihilated. It's only a few seconds, but the least wrong move, just a slight change of expression, really, and the audience can catch on. STAR WARS was made on two levels, really—for audiences who had grown up on the old Saturday matinee serials, and children for whom it was an

entirely new experience. But that alone wasn't the key to its success. It was brilliantly made. George Lucas and all the wonderful technicians who helped him create the illusion really knew what they were doing."

On tour a few years ago, promoting one of her books, Carrie Fisher recalled, "In our first scene together, I had to open by saying, 'Grand Moff Tarkin—I thought I detected your foul stench,' or something like that, and it took real acting, boy, 'cause two minutes before, Cushing was generously telling me



Above: Superb actor Cushing as Tarkin; he breathed life into villains as well as heroes in his career at Hammer Films. Right: Lucas shot Cushing very close, to let the actor wear his slippers during filming.

where my key light was, where to stand so *he* wouldn't upstage me...doing all he could to help a nervous actress in her first major, starring role."

I asked Cushing if he knew he was again in on something special...as he was in the halcyon Hammer years. "I did, yes, but not to the extent I think you're suggesting. I knew it was something special. George was very clever, very confident, knew what he wanted to do and how to get it across to an audience. But a lot of the 'look' of the film—and even the sound of it, such as James Earl Jones' voice for Darth Vader—was added

later. And I'm not in all that much of it. I wasn't on the set that long. So I didn't have the chance to guess what a success it would be. But I had an inkling, if only slightly."

Did Cushing grasp the Nazi subtext of the film's villains? I wondered. "I didn't pay very much attention to that. But yes. It might have been mentioned in the script. It's clearer in some of the costuming—the soldiers' helmets, Darth Vader's headgear—than in others."

Cushing chuckled, as discussion of the film's costuming prompted an anecdote. "Berman's and Nathan's of London has done my wardrobe in film for many years,

and the only time they ever let me down was in STAR WARS. I have embarrassingly large feet, and they sent along a pair of boots for me to wear that must have been two sizes too small. I was in agony wearing these things.

"I finally went to dear George Lucas and said, 'George. I'm not lobbying for extra close-ups, but these boots are absolutely killing me and it's going to affect my performance. Isn't there something that can be done?' He said, 'Absolutely. We have to show you wearing them for your entrance, but after that, I don't see any reason why we can't shoot you in medium shot and medium-close shot.'

"So after my entrance, I performed the whole of STAR WARS as Grand Moff Tarkin wearing a pair of comfortable carpet slippers. By the way, dear boy," he added, "have you any idea, can you possibly tell me, what a 'Grand Moff' is? Sounds vaguely subversive."

I complained that the only disappointment in THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK for me was that they didn't find a way to bring Cushing back. "But how could they?" he responded with quiet incredulity. "I was blown to bits at the end of STAR WARS."

Yes, but we don't really see it. I countered—just like the "demise" of Ming the Merciless and other serial villains of the '30s and '40s, who were brought back for various sequels. "My goodness, you're right," said Cushing. "I could have escaped in a small spacecraft of some kind. Hmmm..."

From then on, every time I spoke with Cushing, and the subject of STAR WARS came up, he lamented that he wasn't brought back for either of the sequels. And it always made me feel terrible.



In the August 23, 1977 issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine—which devoted its cover story to STAR WARS—Lucas volunteered his feelings about Cushing. "Peter Cushing, like Alec Guinness, is a very good actor," said Lucas. "He got an image that is in a way quite beneath him, but he's also idolized and adored by young people and people who go to see a certain kind of movie. I think he will be remembered fondly for the next 350 years at least. And so you say, is that worth anything? Maybe it's not Shakespeare, but certainly equally as important in the world." □

NEVERENDING STORY III

ESCAPE FROM FANTASIA

Fantasy bestseller now tailored more to the American market.

By Alan Jones

Michael Ende's fantasy bestseller *The Neverending Story* is living up to its prophetic title. The third movie based on the children's classic began principal photography on August 9, 1993, in Vancouver, British Columbia. After shooting on location in an abandoned department store in the Gastown district for seven weeks, the \$25 million Cinevox Entertainment Group production moved to Babelsberg Studios in Berlin and completed all interior and special effects work by November 5, 1993. Directed by Peter Macdonald, and starring Jason James Richter (*FREE WILLY*), Melody Kay, Jack Black and Freddie Jones, *THE NEVERENDING STORY III* marks a departure from its two predecessors in that most of the story takes place in the real world rather than the mythical kingdom of Fantasia. Subtitled *ESCAPE FROM FANTASIA*, the German production, shot in English and long ago released to most other world markets, will finally see its U.S. release when Miramax sends it straight to video stores February 11.



Henson Creature Shop puppeteers film the Unlucky, the newest animatronic addition to the Fantasia menagerie.

THE NEVERENDING STORY III was an inevitable undertaking according to producer Tim Hampton. The former Fox executive responsible for overseeing production of *ALIENS*, *LADYHAWKE* and *THE JEWEL OF THE NILE* noted, "THE NEVERENDING STORY and *THE NEVERENDING STORY II: THE NEXT CHAPTER* (which Hampton executive produced for producer Dieter

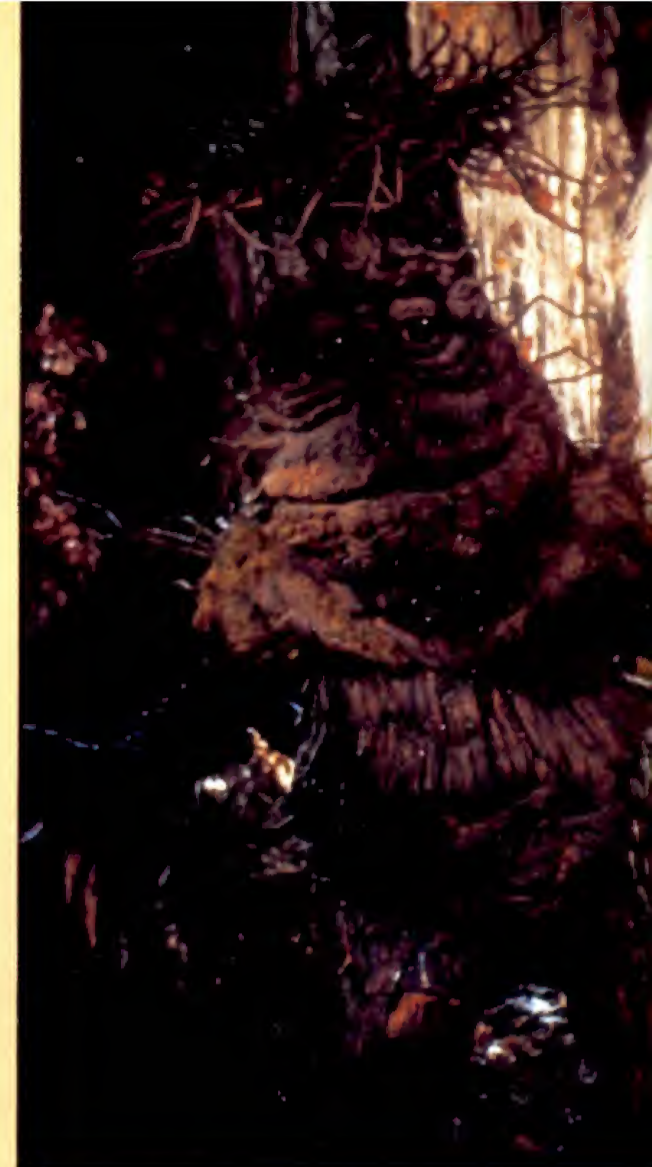
they were in, say, Germany," said Hampton. "That's why we've opened up the script a great deal to stop it being a movie obviously just for eight year-olds. There's a lot of exciting incident and humor that will appeal to both teenagers and parents. We got an American to write the script [Jeff Lieberman, director of the cult horror classics *SQUIRM*, *BLUE SUNSHINE*, and *JUST BEFORE*

Geissler) were enormous international hits garnering over \$150 million in combined boxoffice grosses. *THE NEXT CHAPTER* was also a big video seller and is still in constant demand on cable television stations. Family entertainment has become the fastest growing film market and *THE NEVERENDING STORY* title is a money-spinning franchise they couldn't afford not to capitalize on."

This time out *THE NEVERENDING STORY III* has been deliberately tailored to make it more attractive to the American market. "Both earlier films were not such big draws in the States as

DAWN], we cast up-and-coming star Jason James Richter as Bastian—the other two movies featured unknowns [Barret Oliver and Jonathan Brandish] and we actively sought the involvement of Jim Henson's Creature Shop to design advanced Fantasia creatures that would operate believably in a natural setting without resorting to too much optical work. It was important for our plot reality to have the actual full-size creatures on set and on location so the actors could react and relate to them. We wanted as much done in camera as possible so we could see the result the next day and not have to wait six months before we knew if we'd have to reshoot it."

Author Michael Ende had absolutely nothing to do with the latest reincarnation of his imaginative brainchild. Hampton, production supervisor of the first two *SUPERMAN* movies, pointed out, "We own all rights to the title now. Ende had certain rights on the previous two movies. He had a lot of control on Wolfgang Petersen's *THE NEVERENDING STORY*. On George Miller's *THE NEXT CHAPTER*, it was more along the lines of we had to show him what we were doing at all times and then he'd give us his opinion. But here we're clear and free to do what we want."



The new Bastian, Jason James Richter with the creatures of Fantasia.



The Bark Troll, Falkor the Luck Dragon and Junior Rock Chewer from Henson's Creature Shop. Right: Junior makes a meal of Mt. Rushmore.

“Before we needed 35 puppeteers just to operate one of Falkor’s limbs, now we only need three—maximum—to animate the whole body.”

seven-foot boulder toddler was Rock Biter in the two prior entertainments. “There was a Rock Chewer in the original book and we went with that name rather than the more well known Rock Biter, to distance ourselves further from the previous movies,” said Hampton. “The Rock Chewer family in THE NEVERENDING STORY III comes complete with domestic rows as a parallel to the human story. What happens to

trolled mouths. Before we needed 35 puppeteers just to operate one of Falkor’s limbs, now we only need three—maximum—to animate the whole body.”

When it came to choosing a director to helm THE NEVERENDING STORY III, Hampton didn’t hesitate in recommending Peter Macdonald to his co-producer Dieter Geissler. Noted Hampton, “These special effects-orientated movies need a special kind of person in control. A normal director won’t do. It must be someone with a sense of organization who can take hold of this huge machine and know what’s needed at each given time. I’ve known Peter for ages, we worked on LEGEND together and he’s done second unit stuff on LABYRINTH, BATMAN, THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, DRAGONSLAYER and EXCALIBUR, all

impeccable credentials. He knows what’s required and has a burgeoning career in America after directing MO’ MONEY. That made him a very saleable name for us. What we’ve discovered since, to our joy, is the rapport he’s built with the kids to get great performances out of them. Jason [James Richter] has the sort of ragamuffin charm which makes every mother want

THE NEVERENDING STORY III gives Bastian a problematic stepsister when his father remarries, a troublesome situation further compounded after continuous harassment by a gang of school bullies nicknamed “The Nasties.” Stumbling across his most cherished book at the school library (the mysterious bookstore owner Coreander has now turned librarian), Bastian wishes himself back to Fantasia. Unfortunately “The Nasties” follow and fill the empty pages with their own evil misadventures. Order must be restored to Fantasia by Bastian returning to the real world and retrieving the book. But when using the Auryn, the powerful necklace owned by the childlike Empress, he inadvertently

tently transports a group of Fantasians along with him including Falkor the cowardly Luck Dragon, the miniature gnomes Engywook and his wife Urgl, the tree creature Bark Troll and the lovable junior Rock Chewer. Travelling through the heavens, they’re scattered to different arrival points throughout the USA and, before Bastian can recover the book, he must first locate his friends who each embark on a different quest to rejoin him.

Fans of the book and films will recognize Falkor’s name. They may think their memory is playing tricks on them with regards to the junior Rock Chewer though, as the mischievous

them in Fantasia is cross-cut between Bastian’s family in the real world. We’ve given the Rock Chewers more lines to say thanks to new-found special effects skills. The first movie was made in 1984, the second in 1990, and animatronic techniques have advanced in leaps and bounds since then. Now we can have the creatures speaking much faster with their cablecon-

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Left: Bastian (James Jason Richter) encounters his gnome friends, Engywook (Tony Robinson) and Urgl (Moya Brady) in the Howling Forest. Right: Unlike the earlier films, III is set in the real world, not the book’s Fantasia. When Fantasia is disrupted by The Nasties, Bastian must return to the real world to resolve order.



HENSON'S FANTASIA

Using old-world puppetry with state-of-the-art effects.

By Michael Beeler

Jim Henson's Creature Shop in London used a unique blend of old world traditional puppetry with state-of-the-art computerized animatronics in order to breathe new life into the creatures that inhabit *THE NEVER ENDING STORY III*.

Since they would be shooting much of the film in Germany, it seemed only natural to scout out usable local talent that might add some quality to the production, as well as cut costs. So, John Stephenson, worldwide creative supervisor for the Creature Shop and Verner Gresty, project leader for the production, wound up spending a few days in East Berlin. While visiting various little craft shops, they were amazed to find a well-preserved tradition of storytelling through the use of puppetry.

"It was an incredible experience because we found there's a lot of talent in East Germany, although it's rooted in classical puppetry," explained Stephenson. "Their exposure to film industry techniques has been very, very limited. To bring them up to the sort of speed that we needed was a bit of a job.

"It was actually a fantastic experience to go there and see a form of puppetry that has continued virtually untouched for decades. It was like going back fifty years. They have a great tradition of doing whole productions with quite complicated marionettes. It's a little bit like the theater of Bunraku

in Japan."

During this initial stage of development Stephenson and Gresty also flew to Munich, where the original creatures from the first two films were stored in a shed. They hoped to salvage some of the previous builds, but found the remnants to be useless. It was decided the only way to proceed was to literally start from scratch.

"Falkor was the biggest challenge of the movie," admitted Gresty, who was directly responsible for building Fred Flinstone's enormous bronto crane in *THE FLINTSTONES*. "Everyone wanted a bit more dynamic and a slightly different look to him. But he still had to be fairly similar, with long floppy ears and everything for continuity reasons. So we did a complete resculpt, using some museum sculptors and several tons of clay over a five to six week period."

The finished creature, which



Falkor and Rock Chewer junior. Henson tried to salvage the animatronics from the second film but found them unusable, rusting away in a Munich shed.

ended up weighing about three tons, was supported during filming by a ten-inch diameter hollow steel tube. Fully computerized using various Henson control systems that were attached to enlarged ball and screw linear actuators, the creature was then tied to its own power supply, which was basically a huge raft of car batteries.

Other effects were created using an eighth-scale Falkor for some of the more complex blue screen flying shots. The solid rock, 100-foot-tall Rock Chewer's Family was achieved using performers in suits, which were controlled by the same control system that was used on the ABC television series *DINOSAURS* and *TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES*. Various types of hand puppets were used to produce about 20 forest creatures. And the tiny gnomes were composed using actors in prosthetics filmed against enlarged trees, which

were then inserted into a blue screen shot miniature gnome set.

Although high tech animatronics were intrinsic to this production, Stephenson was quick to add that it was not the most essential ingredient in giving the characters much stronger personalities than they had had in the previous films. "As far as we're concerned, the most important thing, and I think this is something that goes right back 30 years to when Jim Henson first started doing things, was we're very very keen, almost over and above everything else, in concentrating on producing performances for people," explained Stephenson.

He went on to add that no matter what new technologies come along in the future, The Henson Group would always strive to balance the magic of the machine with the creative touch of a human performer. "Enjoyable, entertaining performances is what we do best. And, quite frankly, whether it happens to be a mechanical thing or an image on a screen, it really doesn't worry us too much. We became very good at animatronics when animatronics was the only option. We're now developing CGI techniques, which are very particular to our company. I think we'll always use animatronics. We'll always use hand puppets and we'll also use CGI and whatever the next step will be. All that's actually happened is that we've now got something very new and exciting to use as well." □

Preparing the Unlucky for filming. The character is named for his penchant for getting crushed, trampled, or flattened whenever he encounters trouble.



to pick him up and hold him. Peter has showcased that quality perfectly and can tap into his humor and draw that out too. I felt that kind of warmth was slightly lacking in THE NEXT CHAPTER."

The appeal in directing THE NEVERENDING STORY III for an old hand at the fantasy form like Peter Macdonald can be put down to one reason. Said Macdonald, "It was a family film with a very unusual setting and a strong storyline. It had a lot of THE WIZARD OF OZ allure to me, which everyone loves, whether they be 100 or two years old. I'm hoping the public will warm to our creatures as they did to Dorothy's friends. I've been around a lot of fantasy films so I've seen how to do it, and how not to do it as well. The mistake people often make with this type of film is to swamp it completely in special effects and forget the story in the process. But we aren't just putting all our efforts into a talking tree! We ensured we had a sound story first before concentrating on all the other fantasy facets."

Macdonald said he only accepted the directing assignment with one main proviso. "I told Tim [Hampton] I couldn't possibly consider THE NEVERENDING STORY III unless I had better creatures than they had on the prior movies. Once we'd agreed on approaching the Creature Shop, we met with Brian Henson who proved to be as initially reluctant as I was to get involved. No one likes to make the sequel to a sequel or the third of anything! But when I showed Brian our storyboards, conceptual drawings and designs, which he adored, he put the entire Creature Shop talent behind us. I was thrilled because no one is more expert at their craft than the Henson people."

The major new creature the Henson brigade designed was the rabbit-like Unlucky who always gets into a jam and never gets out in time before he's either crushed, trampled or flattened.

Filming at Babelsberg Studios in former East Berlin, the site of such classics as Fritz Lang's METROPOLIS and Josef Von Sternberg's THE BLUE ANGEL,

"We aren't just putting all our efforts into a talking tree! We ensured we had a sound story first before concentrating on all the other fantasy facets."



Director Peter Macdonald (left) rehearses Freddie Jones in the Crystal Cave. Miramax releases the film direct to video on February 11.

worried Macdonald at first. "I had worked here before as the camera operator on CABARET and I deliberately made sure we were a week ahead of schedule in Canada because I was so scared of losing time in Berlin," he said. "All the Communist stories are true; they did straighten out bent nails for reuse on other set constructions! That mentality has been hard to cope with sometimes but the multi-national crew have meshed as well as you'd expect, considering. The German sense of humor is more in tune with the British than the Canadian one at least."

Getting all the disparate elements together, both on screen and off, was Macdonald's major challenge. He sighed, "It's not easy working with young actors as you have to keep their concentration at a premium. And a day like we've had today is a case in point; the full-size 30-foot Falkor has had to crashland in the windswept Howling Forest, neatly sliding over Unlucky, with the Lobster Men ready to move in. All this has had to jell and look good. [The director of photography is Robin Vidgeon who lit HELLRAISER, NIGHTBREED and THE FLY II.] The sheer logistics of these

huge creatures has been a formidable hurdle. In Canada we were as mobile as you could possibly hope to be considering the army of technicians we had travelling with us. For one scene we had to get the enormous Bark Troll up a mountain to deliver a Greenpeace speech at the edge of a lake. You do it because we know what we're up against with movies like JURASSIC PARK and THE FLINTSTONES. We made a conscious choice not to go the CGI route because it's important our characters interact at all times."

Nevertheless, visual and optical effects supervisor Derek Meddings utilized advanced digital imaging techniques to put THE NEVERENDING STORY III together. The James Bond movie veteran revealed, "Instead of being composed on an optical printer it will be formed on computer. Working in conjunction with the special computer graphic company BI-BO, we are shooting against a blue velvet-like material rather than the normal back-lit blue screen because that's too intense for this process. I'm painting mattes directly onto the computer screen too. I used to be a matte artist but had to

give it up through color blindness. Now I just pick a color number and it's drawn in straight away."

Meddings was the second unit director on THE NEXT CHAPTER and said, "The first two movies were very serious. We've lightened this one up a lot. There's beautiful sets, more humor, great creatures thanks to the Henson mob and Nazi/Nasties symbolism if you want to look for it. Altogether it will be a better looking and more entertaining picture."

Peter Macdonald thought so too. He added, "When Fantasia's creatures come to the real world it causes a lot of trouble for humans...and a lot of fun for audiences. THE NEVERENDING STORY III has magical adventure for children and adults plus an important message i.e. Bastian's helpers are more a hindrance to his mission and he must find the inner strength to become a hero himself. Having worked in America now, I've picked up on Hollywood's expertise with rhythm. That tremendous pace combined with the tongue-in-cheek humour and likeable ingenuity of Jason [James Richter] will appeal to all nationalities and ensure a fourth film. I can honestly say I've had a very good time directing what I hope will be a vast improvement over the first two features." □

The late Derek Meddings second-unit effects team shoots the Rock Chewer Junior feasting on Mt. Rushmore.



ASTEROID

DARKMAN II director Bradford May on delivering big-screen action and effects.

By Dan Scapperotti

Between Mars and Jupiter lies an asteroid belt, a group of tiny planets following an orbit around the sun along with their larger planetary neighbors. For millions of years these masses of stone have traveled a set path through the solar system. That is about to change.

When *ASTEROID*, a new mini-series, is broadcast on NBC in February, the planetary alignment will be shattered as a comet hurtles through the asteroid fields sending several out of orbit and on a collision course with the Earth.

Helming the ambitious project is director Bradford May, a fourth-generation filmmaker whose great grandfather ran the grip department of 20th Century-Fox in 1925. May has worked his way up in the industry. He started his career at Universal as a second assistant cameraman in 1977. He cut his directorial teeth on an episode of the 1985 CBS version of *THE TWILIGHT ZONE* when William Friedkin bowed out. Since then he has worn two hats, director and director of photography, on many of his projects. May put a caped crusader through his paces in *DARKMAN II* and *III* before being tapped to direct NBC's disaster epic.

"There's no sex, no violence," said May about his latest film. "It's just about asteroids coming down. It's kind of an apocalyptic tale of what might happen. NBC green lighted the project to fill a void in their February sweeps lineup. Because of the size of the movie, the special effects, the CGI work, it's a tremendous task to get it on by February."

In November, 1995 executive producer John Davis and NBC came to May with a project they thought couldn't be made. "We're trying to pull a rabbit out of the hat with *ASTEROID*," May freely admitted,



Michael Biehn as Jack Wallace, the director of FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency), standing amid the rubble of an asteroid fragment.

"because it's an awfully big task. A lot of special effects spanned over two nights so that's a lot of movie. It's about 180 minutes of film I have to deliver here in a 55 day period without much 2nd unit. It's a big task."

While most mini-series are cast with faces familiar to television viewers, May wanted to avoid that ploy. For his leads he cast Michael Biehn as Jack Wallace, the director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Annabella Sciorra as Dr. Lily McKee, the head astronomer of the National Observatory.

"I was very instrumental in selecting the cast," said May. "I wanted an un-television, un-characteristic long form situation and I thought of Michael Biehn and Annabella Sciorra right out of the gate and the script attracted them."

A staple of any disaster movie are the human interest stories threaded throughout the film. How a disparate group of people are affected by the calamity. And May isn't above doing a little flag waving. "Our movie's about America," said the director. "All of America. Black, white, Hispanic. It's politically correct. I wanted to get as

much of that into this movie as I could so that everyone could relate to the picture.

"We live in a great country and no matter what, when this country is put under extreme pressure either from something like an asteroid hit or earthquakes or floods it's amazing how people pull together. Americans show up in someone else's hour of need. That's how I felt after the earthquake in 1994 when my house was actually destroyed by an earthquake. It was amazing how many people came to my aid."

Filming of the massive project was done in Denver and back at the Burbank studios of Stargate Films, the special effects house which created the plethora of visuals needed for the film. Colorado became the focal point for filming when May received the vital cooperation of the Department of Defense. To enlist that support May made a minor change to the script.

Originally, May had the space shuttle being used in the attempt to destroy the asteroids. This didn't fly with the DOD, but May and company changed the shuttle to an attack by a trio of fighters armed with lasers.

"We changed it to a triangular laser beam where a group of F-16 and F-15 fighter planes are equipped with these devices. This is a real device. It's a laser device which came up during the Reagan years of Star Wars that we would use, not as a weapon, but as a defensive mechanism. These are applied to these planes and flown in a triangular situation to try to destroy the asteroid."

DOD support generated a lot of production value for the project. "We have been shooting at an airfield here called Buckley Airforce base and because of DOD approval I've had as many Hueys, C130s, F-15s and as much military support and manpower as I needed," said May.

© EVACUATION SITE



The evacuation center in Fort Worth, set up to house the fleeing population of Dallas. A cast of 2000 is used for the mass exodus scenes, after the city has been leveled by an asteroid fragment.

The attack on the asteroids merely fragments the hurtling monoliths, and a wider area comes under their deadly threat. The main asteroid slams into Dallas, Texas. Fragments Eros and Enos hit Kansas City and Denver.

In the film, an evacuation center is set up in Fort Worth to house the fleeing populace of Dallas. May erected a huge tent city for the climactic sequences of the film. "We had at any one time 2,000 people there," said May. "Then we used CGI to put in Dallas smoking in the background. All of our stories will culminate at the tent city which is unique for television. All of the different people, some of whom know each other some of whom don't, will be there. At the end of the movie everybody will watch what has caused all this trouble, which was the Fletch Comet, which flies by at the end of the movie.

"I've chosen Stargate Films and Sam Nicholson to be my visual special effects people. They've gone the extra mile for me because they love the project so much."

Another major set piece of the film is an asteroid hit in Kansas City. Jack Wallace has helped with the evacuation and is making a last minute check of the city when he picks up two firemen in his FEMA truck. Suddenly, the asteroid plunges into a dam and a torrent of water rages into the city. Jack and his passenger must race against time to escape the roaring cascade of water churning behind them.

"Our hero has to outrun a flood and its very reminiscent of TWISTER," said May. "Its got some wonderful effects in it and I think people are just going to be shocked and on the edge of their chairs with it. Especially on television."

While many mini-series

have a tendency to appear padded, especially on the second night, May deliberately set out to avoid that problem with ASTEROID. "This is not padded," he stated in no uncertain terms. "This is non-stop, high octane all the way through. We don't reiterate any stories, where in most of your courtroom dramas or your true stories or your Danielle Steels kind of have filler. There is none in here. I'm making it as visual as possible and making it as exciting as possible. I didn't want to make a mini-series where people felt night two was just reiterating the old story while waiting for a climax. At the end of hour one we have a flood that takes out Kansas City, and from that point on it's just non-stop action. We're doing some stuff that, thanks to the horsepower of the people we have and the producers, I don't think anyone has ever seen anything like this for television."

To insure that audiences tune in for the second night the production spent \$750,000 of the effects budget for the destruction of Dallas which opens night two. A large section of Dallas is blown away when the big asteroid hits.

May acts as a conduit for every aspect of

The smoldering ruins of Dallas. Little is left of the city after being hit by one of the fragments from the asteroid as it hurtles toward collision with the Earth.



"I didn't want to make a mini-series where people felt night two was just reiterating the old story while waiting for a climax."

—Director Bradford May—

the production. "Because I'm the kind of director that I am, I'm very open to suggestions but also very intensely driven to what I want to do and my vision. The people I've brought aboard are people who understood what my vision for the project was. So I could keep 60 or 70 million people from turning their channels in mid February."

Although May is not a big booster of storyboarding scenes, he felt that this film demanded the use of that technique. "I work very spontaneously," he advised, "but, in a big special-effects movie where you have a lot of people who must be up to speed on what's required of them for each of the locations and sequences, it was imperative that I change my ways a little bit and storyboard. It's been helpful because it has given me some sort of vision. We've gone with color renditions of all of this stuff because we're doing such things as replacing skies, because after an asteroid hits who knows what happens. So I've taken some liberty and some license to create that through my vision.

"I have designed and storyboarded everything myself. I did some storyboarding on some of the action sequences in DARKMAN II & III. This is probably the most elaborate I've gotten. I had two storyboard artists who worked with me for five months in designing this picture. Storyboards are only a guide, but are very helpful when you've got so many different elements involved."

While May's last canvas were the dark factories of DARKMAN, this film broadens his horizons to all of America.

"This is what America is all about," said the director. "I find this movie more challenging but of course when I was doing the DARKMAN films that was about as challenging as I could imagine then. We did both of those DARKMAN movies in about 50 days and here it's 55 days for two nights of television. The DARKMANs ran about 90 minutes per and these run about 95 per. There's just more cast involved, more elements and a much bigger effects budget then we had on DARKMAN.

"That was done with smoke and mirrors, although this is being done with a lot of smoke and mirrors it is still very, very visually effected with a lot of live-action that makes people believe it's happening. We have a tremendous amount of action with live action cuts so that you believe these visual effects when they happen. I think that's probably the biggest thing we've brought to the movie."

Location shooting has been a major difficulty for May and company. The necessity of the appearance of deserted streets and abandoned buildings were a natural prerequisite for the story. "We have to clear out the whole city because the city is supposed to be evacuated," said May. "That becomes very hard to do when you're in a metropolis like Denver. Obviously parking lots can't be full of people or cars. We have to have a lot of vacancy. That has been the toughest thing up to now, to be able to shoot areas that look like they're desolated without having to do a lot of erasing through CGI work."

Faced with the biggest production NBC has ever undertaken independently and working with a budget of around \$17.5 million, May is hoping to get results a \$100 million project could be proud of.

"Because of the success of INDEPENDENCE DAY and TWISTER we feel this will play right into the hands of that audience, because we are so effects-oriented and story-oriented. If you look at ID4 and TWISTER there isn't much story. We get right into the characters who are involved, and the triumph of the human spirit."

A landmark film which will challenge television programming in the future is how May sees his new picture. "In night one we have an asteroid hitting Kansas City and flooding Kansas City. It's one wild sequence and that happens in the first hour of the film. I don't think anybody is going to be hitting their remote switch on this. I think channel surfing is going to be put to death when they see ASTEROID." □

Director Bradford May (l) and visual effects producer Peter Ware, prepare to film the rubble of what used to be Denver.



ASTEROID EFFECTS

Stargate Films delivered big-screen pizzazz on a TV budget.

By Dan Scapperotti

When ASTEROID flashes across television screens in February, the main attraction will be those hurtling bodies from outer space and the destruction they bring. It will be a showcase for the effects wizardry of eight year old Stargate Films. The effects are being directed by Sam Nicholson and supervised by Don Schmidt, who oversees the studio operation and all the miniature photography. Among the effects staged by Stargate are the destruction of Dallas and Kansas City, a blazing oil field and a devastating flood.

No stranger to the genre, Nicholson first worked on STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE. There he created the special effects lighting sequences including the V'ger scenes, transporter light effects and energy probes on the bridge. He also worked on GHOSTBUSTERS II, HIGHLANDER II, and just finished ROBO WARRIORS for Viacom.

"We're doing all the visual effects for ASTEROID," said Nicholson, who has a staff of 50 effects people on the project. "This is probably the most ambitious television project, effects-wise, that's ever been done. It is very ambitious."

There are six asteroid hits in the four-hour mini-series. In night one, Kansas City takes a hit when a meteor crashes into a dam causing a tidal wave to roar into the city. "Of course, there is no large dam outside of Kansas City," Nicholson confided, "so we've taken the San Gabriel dam here in Los Angeles and built a matching miniature of it. We've basically combined that with plates of Kansas City and then exploded the dam when an asteroid hits it. The entire Kansas City area gets flooded in a massive wave of debris and water. Our hero, Jack Wallace, played by Michael Biehn, is trying to outrace this wall of water in a



Stargate Films' visual effects supervisor, Sam Nicholson during filming of helicopter aerial plates.

pickup truck with these guys in the back. So he's racing down the road with a million, trillion gallons of water chasing him as semis are being wiped out and trains are being knocked off their tracks and it's taking out buildings."

Since Nicholson's budget precluded building mammoth sets and water tanks for the flood scenes, he turned to water explosions for their dramatic impact. "Ultimate Effects did the water explosions rigging for us on the dam breaking," he said. "We

use air mortars that are packed with water. We're shooting them very high speed in the 300-500 frames per second range. And we're exploding things using water where its almost too fast to see. Then you see it slowed way down and its really quite remarkable. Doing water explosions with pneumatic drivers and pyro is something very unique."

The live-action was filmed on Market Street in Denver, Colorado. The effects team has matched Market Street to a duplicate miniature at the studio. Using helicopters, they've shot ground and aerial scenes of Biehn racing down the street. Then he and his car are matted into the miniature as the wall of water cascades through, wiping out the whole set.

The apocalyptic demise of Dallas is a major set piece for the film. When the asteroid hits the city it leaves a giant crater. The real crater was a 150' high excavation site near Denver rigged with gas jets for the many fires left in the wake of the explosion.

"We're destroying Dallas almost completely because they take a direct hit," said Nicholson. "We're building a lot of the buildings that are in Dallas at about 25th scale and basically blowing them up. We did a lot of helicopter shooting with the new Kodak Vision 500T stock pushed to a thou-



Above: Visual effects supervisor Dan Schmidt prepares for a scene involving the explosion of a jackknifing tanker truck hit by an asteroid fragment. Below: The Stargate effects crew shoots a miniature F-16.



Not only is Nicholson the visual effects director, he also works closely with director Bradford May as director of photography and directs some second unit sequences. Nicholson and Pete Ware, the supervising producer, shot an exciting opening sequence which sets up the story. A trucker is driving across the Montana plains when an asteroid crashes into his tanker. The truck explodes and sets fire to the grasslands.

"That's a major hit," said Nicholson, "that we filmed in California outside of Ridgecrest and Caddeback Dry Lake. We built matching miniatures to the full

“The [Bradford] May Way is basically over the top, break the rules, action film. In fact, if we *don't* go over the top, he's not happy.”

—Effects Dir. Sam Nicholson—

scale which we shot outside Mojave. Then we matched that exact look in the desert with miniatures. Being able to shoot both things simultaneously with the same team gave us an exact match between the full scale photography and the miniature photography.”

A team from Flix Effects was brought in to rig the tanker sequence. They set up a pneumatic driver that would drive the six foot model truck down a 35' section of road dressed with miniature telephone poles and other landscaping. Then, at the precise moment they had the tanker jackknife and explode.

“Bradford is a very dynamic director,” said Nicholson. “We joke about his directing style, calling it The May Way. The May Way is basically over the top, break the rules, action film. In fact if we *don't* go over the top, he's not happy.”

To make the February delivery date and to insure a more fluid match between effects and live action, the entire production is being edited at Stargate. “We're finishing the project here,” said Nicholson. “We have complete integration with the editors who are all working with Media 100s. We are up to 250G of memory. Four editors are working simultaneously. We're dropping effects into the film even before principle photography is completed which is the only way we can beat the schedule.

“It is a massive, ambitious project. What we're making is ID4 for television, but doing it with a fraction of the budget and a fraction of the time.” □

sand at night in and around Dallas.”

Raising the level of visual believability, Nicholson and company have put computer generated glass in the buildings scheduled to be destroyed. “When the shock waves go through them it blows off all the computer glass,” said Nicholson, “with shock wave created dust. Then we've matted people into the ground shots filmed on a very large scale, 250' green screen on a stage up in Denver. We're having people run from flaming debris. The streets ripple up behind them and cars are getting flipped around, buildings are coming down. It pretty much destroys all of Dallas.

For shots of the asteroids approaching Earth, Nicholson used a combination of NASA footage and computer generated images. “There is a lot of space stuff in it,” Nicholson advised. “We're doing the POVs of the asteroids swinging in from deep space which is all computer generated and practical motion control on stage. Computer generated star fields as the asteroids come in through the atmosphere. We're also using a great deal of NASA footage which is the actual high earth POVs and we're adding computer generated asteroids.”

Left: Jim Dirken rescues Michael Blehn before the house blows. Right: The Stargate camera crew captures the blast in all its pyrotechnic glory.



LOST HIGHWAY

David Lynch collaborates with Wild At Heart author Barry Gifford.

By Steve Biodrowski

In *LOST HIGHWAY*, Fred Madison (Bill Pullman), after being convicted of murdering his wife, Renee (Patricia Arquette), finds a unique way of escaping prison: he transforms into another person, Pete Dayton (Balthazar Getty), and embarks on a new life. However, he soon encounters Alice Wakefield (also played by

Pete Dayton (Balthazar Getty) has an affair with Alice Wakefield (Arquette), Renee's doppelganger.



Arquette), who appears to be a blond re-incarnation of Renee. After beginning an affair with the gangster's moll, he soon finds incidents from his former existence increasingly impinging on his new reality, until he is forced to resume his former identity and confront the forces aligned against him, including a "Mystery Man" (played with brilliantly uncanny menace by Robert Blake), who seems to hold the secret of unraveling Fred-Pete's dual existence.

At least, that's as close as anyone can come to summarizing the plot of David Lynch's new film, which takes some realistic elements of the hard-boiled school, wraps them in Lynch's patented surrealism, and overlays the result with stunning film noir stylings (courtesy of cinematographer Peter Deming) and imaginative sound design (by Lynch himself).

But this is far from an empty exercise in style derived from a flimsy scenario. The screenplay was actually rigorously worked out by Lynch in collaboration with Barry Gifford, whose novel *Wild at Heart* provided the basis for a previous Lynch feature. "I can explain it [the film] to you in a very clinical way, and it would make sense," claimed Gifford. "At the same time, we did some different things with it; we obviously took some twists and turns—took some liberties—to create a larger possibility, especially in the end.

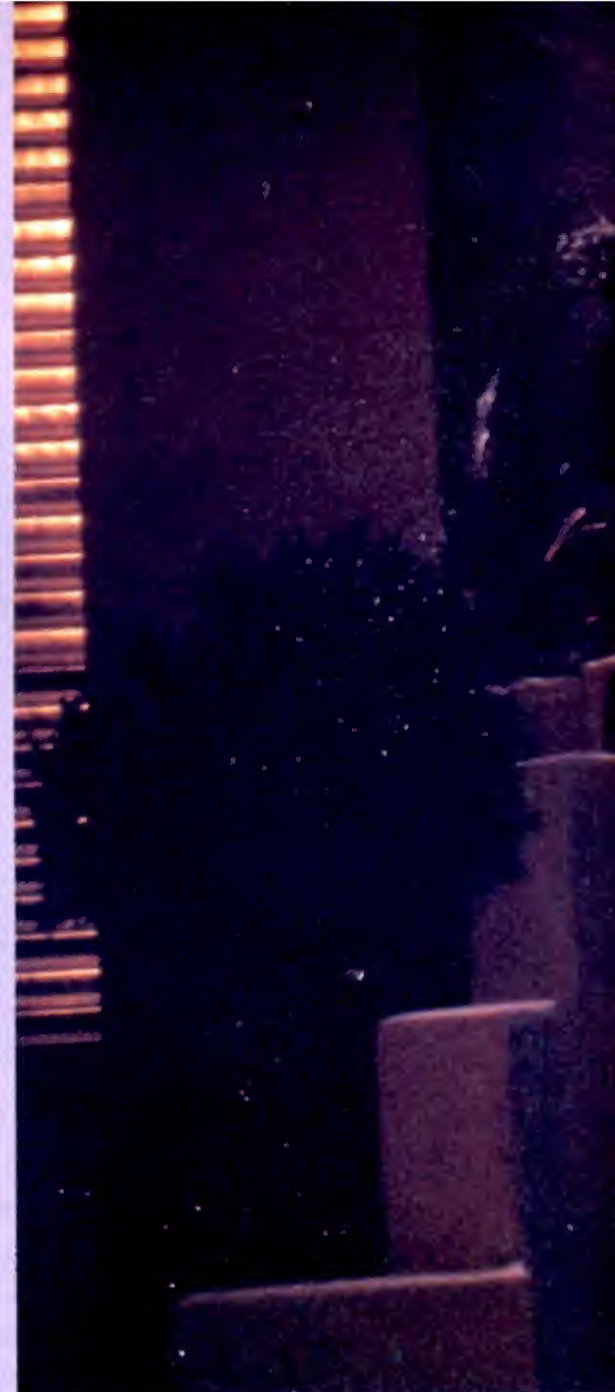
"David and I have the same idea about going to a movie, which is that you enter a dream state and suspend everything; you have to surrender to this, not go in trying to be hypercritical or analytical. When you go

to a David Lynch film, all those things go out the window; you just better not try to impose your own ideas on what's going on up there. To a certain extent that's true of my fiction, too; I think that's why we're a good match. We write well together and like each other. We're a couple of regular guys on a lost highway."

The original script grew from a very small seed in a previous Gifford novel. Said Lynch, "There was one line of dialogue in *Night People*: a character said something about going down the 'lost highway.' The two words made me dream, and I told that to Barry. He said, 'Let's write something.' About a year and a half went by before we actually did something, but it had nothing to do with *Night People*, although I really liked the book and I did option it several years ago for one year, but didn't do anything with it."

Added Gifford, "We took a couple lines, but from one we only took the title, *LOST HIGHWAY*," explained Gifford. "That was also of course the title of an old Hank Williams tune from the '50s, so it was not a totally original term. We both liked it, and we used it. We took one or maybe two lines out of the book and appropriated them; other than that it was original." For the premise, Gifford said he and Lynch "discussed several possibilities. He was interested in the idea, 'What if one person became another person?' Basically, that's all we had to go on: this poetic title and that thought."

Lynch (clearly the more intuitive and less analytical of the two collaborators) does not recall providing the specific





Left: Fred Madison (Bill Pullman) tells his wife Renee (Patricia Arquette) to wait outside while he checks out their house, which he fears has been invaded. Above: Director David Lynch and cinematographer Peter Deming set up a shot.

premise. "I don't remember saying that," he admitted. "I may have been thinking about identity, and this came up in our discussions." Lynch added, "The title *LOST HIGHWAY* had a dreamlike, mysterious quality to it. Barry said he had some ideas, and I said I had some ideas, so I flew up to Berkeley. I told Barry my ideas, and he told me his; he hated my ideas, and I hated his ideas. So we sat there for a while. Then I told him a kind of waking dream I had, and he liked it. A sequence unfolded in my head one time on the last night of shooting *FIRE WALK WITH ME*. That's what I told Barry, and that's what got us started: his words and my [dream]. That started a direction, and the rest unfolded."

This was Lynch and Gifford's first co-scripting effort. (Lynch had adapted *WILD AT HEART* on his own, and Gifford had scripted two episodes of *HOTEL ROOM*, a short-lived HBO series, for the director.) "This was the first time we collaborated in close circumstances," recalled Gifford. "We're able to create opportunities for each other. That's really the best part of a collaboration. I don't know if David would say it quite that way, but I think we inspire each other. One thing that David likes from me, that he has told me several times, is that I can recreate this kind of 'slice of life,' as he likes to call it—kind of reality-base. If you read my novels, you see how sometimes surreal or fantastic things come up, while still being literary novels. I think David runs a similar path."

Of collaborating with Gifford, Lynch said, "Barry's writing may be sparse, but

for me it makes you dream—there's a lot between the lines. I really liked those [episodes of *HOTEL ROOM*]*—*they were like little plays Barry wrote. There was lots of stuff going on, even though it was implied—it wasn't so much *there*. It was beautiful, beautiful writing."

Gifford referred to working with Lynch as a "challenge" that was well worth the effort, explaining "I know that the result David is going to get on the screen will be extraordinary and unlike anybody else's; it ain't gonna bore you, and it's going to be beautiful. He has great integrity, as far as the production values are concerned. He's not afraid, obviously, to go anywhere and try anything, and that's very, very rare. Working with the director like that you could put in little notes and almost poetic references at times, which he would then utilize as if they were stage directions. You put in things that you might not in a generic script, so the script is a special sort of work."

Although the result might seem to resemble a hard-boiled crime story rammed head-on into a bad dream, Gifford points out that one cannot divide up the contributions of the two writers so clearly, due to their similar sensibilities. "I think there's a real combination there," he said. "David is quite good at creating *noirish* scenarios. I wouldn't call this hard-boiled at all. It's beautiful. It's scary, but it's psychologically frightening, and there isn't much gore. I don't want anyone to think this is a murder mystery. It's not at all. I hope not everybody feels like they were in a bad dream. That certainly wasn't my intention. I just don't

think of the word 'bad' in connection with it; it was sad more than bad."

Of how the finished film derived from this script will be received, Gifford is uncertain. "We went out on a limb with this thing and just let everything out," he said. "When you do that, people don't generally like this sort of stuff, so you know you're going to get slapped around to some extent. The reaction to this kind of thing is very cyclical, and I don't know what the reaction will be in 1997."

"I guess what I see in *LOST HIGHWAY*," he concluded, "is a sadness, really—terror certainly—and it's kind of a metaphor for our time: a sort of fractured existence, of the pressures that people are laboring under at the very end of the 20th Century. In other words, it's not so easy to cope." □

Exaggerated lighting effects reveal Madison's inner turmoil, as he fears his wife is having an affair.



N

British fantasy

By Paula Vitaris

Have you ever thought about helping out a street person and then passed on by, because you're afraid you'll get yourself into really big trouble? That's just what happens to young businessman Richard Mayhew in *NEVERWHERE*, a new British television series written by fantasy author Neil Gaiman and directed by Dewi Humphries, which aired in six one-half episodes last September and October on BBC-2, the smaller and more arty of the BBC's two channels. *NEVERWHERE* is the first venture into television for Gaiman, who has been recognized primarily for his graphic novels and comic books, particularly the enormously popular *Sandman* series, as well for his many short stories and poems, and a best-selling comic novel, *Good Omens*, co-authored with Terry Pratchett.

NEVERWHERE is an urban fairy-tale about London, and even though it doesn't begin with the words "once upon a time," perhaps it should. In Gaiman's conception, London is divided into two worlds: the first is London Above, the realistic, workaday world of nine-to-five jobs, mortgages, and dinners with the boss, and the second is its hidden mirror, London Below, a subterranean society of cast-offs and dispossessed who go literally unnoticed by London Above and dwell in the labyrinth of tunnels underneath the city's streets. London Below is a feudalistic, treacherous world of tribes, baronies and fiefdoms where magic exists, rats rule, and what you learned Above won't be any help at all, should you mistakenly stumble into the world Below.

As the story opens, Richard Mayhew, a kind but indecisive young Scotsman employed by a London securities firm, is on the way to a very important dinner with his fiancée Jessica. When he and Jessica come upon an unconscious girl bleeding and lying on the sidewalk, Richard impulsively decides to ignore Jessica's pleas that he merely call an ambulance and continue on to their dinner date with her boss. Instead, he brings Door, the girl, back to his flat and tends to her injuries, and in doing so, unwittingly takes the first step onto a path that will change his life forever. His good



Above: Richard Mayhew (Gary Bakewell) with the gentle, blind Abbot of the Black Friars (Earl Cameron).
Below: Mr. Croup (Hywel Bennet) holds a knife to the throat of the Marquis de Carabas (Peterson Joseph).



EVERYWHERE

author Neil Gaiman on his urban fairy tale.

deed, much like that of the Prince of Wales at the beginning of Mark Twain's *THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER*, unexpectedly propels him into a world as strange to him as Twain's *Offal Court* was to young Prince Edward. What Richard doesn't know is that Door, the daughter of one of London Below's aristocratic families, has barely escaped with her life from two relentless assassins, Mr. Croup and Mr. Vandemar, who have murdered her parents and sister. By helping her, Richard not only attracts the unwanted attention of Door's pursuers, but his act of compassion exiles him from all that he has known.

The next day, Richard finds neither Jessica nor his workmates recognize him, the bank machine rejects his card, taxis won't stop for him, and his landlord rents out his flat from under him. His existence has been wiped out. Desperately he seeks out Door, who has returned to London Below with the aid of the roguish Marquis de Carabas. Soon Door and Richard, in reluctant alliance, set off on a journey that they hope will solve the question of who ordered the slaying of her family, and restore Richard to his life Above.

If the concept of London Above and London Below sounds a bit familiar to fans of the 1987-1990 CBS series *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*, which depicted, in highly romanticized fashion, a tunnel society below the streets of New York, the resemblance is completely unintentional. Gaiman estimated he has watched about half an hour of *BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*, and avoided it entirely once he had begun working on *NEVERWHERE*. "Either you worry about nicking stuff, or conversely, you go round the other way, and you wind up not doing things you came up with yourself, because they've already come up with it," he observed. Instead, the low-budget *NEVERWHERE*, shot on video, harks back to similarly in-

"What I proposed was looking at the marginalized, at the people who fall through the cracks," said creator Neil Gaiman, "but doing it more as a metaphor."



NEVERWHERE creator Neil Gaiman is best known for his graphic novels and comic books. The BBC series is his first venture into television.

expensive offerings from British television, such as *DR. WHO*, *RED DWARF* and *THE HITCHHIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY*, and its storyline derives from the archetypal quests of myth and literature (although this time the hero doesn't carry a sword). One self-acknowledged influence is *THE WIZARD OF OZ* (the characters themselves refer to it) with a touch of *BRIGADOON* added in for good measure.

NEVERWHERE originated with a suggestion to Gaiman from British comedian, actor and producer Lenny Henry in early 1991, when the two were collaborating on a comic book to commemorate that year's Comic Relief, England's annual charity drive. Henry told Gaiman he was starting his own production company, Crucial Films, and the BBC had approached him about creating a contemporary fantasy for television. Henry, a fan of comics, includ-

ing *The Sandman*, thought Gaiman might be interested in writing the series. "Lenny said his only idea was that he would like something set amongst the homeless," Gaiman recalled. "I went home, and I thought about this, and I wrote Lenny a long fax, saying I don't want to do anything set amongst the homeless. The reason I didn't want to is that I could have made it really cool and glamorous to be homeless on the streets of London. And it's not. I have friends who've been homeless. It's a horrible, mind-numbing, physically destructive thing. And if one kid ran away from home in Liverpool or Birmingham because she'd seen how cool it was to be homeless on the telly, I couldn't live with myself. What I proposed doing was looking at the marginalized, at the people who fall through the cracks, but doing it more as a metaphor. That was the basic idea of *NEVERWHERE*, that there are two Londons. There is London above, which is the one that we all live in. And then there's

London below, which is this huge city, every bit as big and strange, but it exists in the cracks and its inhabited by these strange people who over the centuries have fallen through those cracks."

Gaiman researched real-life tunnel dwellers in cities like New York and Rio de Janeiro, but his observations of London in the late 1980s, which he described in his collection *Angels & Visitations* as "a period of financial excess and moral bankruptcy," also contributed to his portrait of a divided London, one he believes still relevant in the 1990s. "Unfortunately, the feelings and observations that inspired *NEVERWHERE* aren't just 1980s feelings," he said. "They remain very current today. One of the saddest moments in filming came one evening when we had to film on the Strand [the principal street through the City, London's theater and financial district]. The courtyard where the food bus was parked was a

classy 1930s building off the Strand, overlooking the Thames. It was scenic and wonderful—and the 'bedroom,' in chilly February, for a few hundred homeless people."

In March 1992 the BBC finally commissioned a pilot script, which Gaiman completed in June. The response from the BBC was a drawn-out silence. "The BBC is very, very big, and it's very, very slow, and its wheels grind finely," Gaiman commented wryly. "At the end of those 18 months I was convinced that we were definitely dead. And then in December 1993, I got a phone call saying, 'Okay! Can you write episodes two and three really fast now, please? We need them by Easter.'"

Gaiman, who had moved to the United States in 1992, decamped to Galveston, Texas, to escape winter's chill and write the two episodes, although episode three was completed in Finland, where he had flown to attend a convention. Once again, the BBC sat on the project, this time for eight months until December 1994, when Gaiman was asked to write the final three scripts. He wrote episode four in England, while staying at the waterfront home of his friend, singer/songwriter Tori Amos. "Episode four is very wet, mainly because I was looking out on this canal," he said. "I kept throwing people in canals and in the mud, which is very easy to do when you're very warm. I felt so guilty later on [on the set], when some poor sod's just been thrown in the mud for the fifteenth time, and it's sub-zero temperature. Everybody's breath is steaming in the air, and because you're the writer and the only person not doing anything, you're the only one actually sitting in front of the one gas heater."

Gaiman turned in the last three scripts in the summer of 1995, and shortly thereafter Crucial Films received the go-ahead from the BBC to begin production. In September, Gaiman and Lenny Henry began the process of choosing a director and then casting the series. Meeting with potential directors proved frustrating, according to Gaiman, until he met Welsh director Dewi Humphries, veteran of hundreds of commercials as well as a director of a wide variety of programs for British television. "We got a few directors who would come in to be interviewed, and they would say things like, 'You know, I have a problem with this.' I'd say, 'Okay, what's the problem?' And they'd say, 'I read the script, and one page it'll be really funny, and on the next page it'll be sort of fantastical and

"I could have made it real cool or glamorous to be homeless on the streets of London. But it's not... It's a horrible, mind-numbing, physically destructive thing."



On location filming London's Klink Street Vaults, (left to right) writer Neil Gaiman, John Whiston, head of BBC Youth Programming, and producer Clive Brill.

strange and weird, and on the next page it'll be scary. And obviously there's a real problem in tone with this. I think you need to even out the tone so that it's one thing or the other.' And we'd say, 'Next!' The whole point of NEVERWHERE is that it's not one thing or the other. It is funny, it is scary, it is weird, it's all sorts of things, and there's no reason why they can't all happen at once. I saw some films Dewi had made for English television. He made one called A STICKY WICKET which was an incredibly funny farce, and one called TENDER LOVING CARE, which was a story about a lady serial killer, a nurse killing old folks in an old folks' home. It was really chilling. I thought, 'Well, he can do both. I like this! His funny stuff is funny, and his scary stuff is scary.' I really liked him and I thought he was smart, so he was the director that we chose."

The producer of NEVERWHERE is Clive Brill, a drama producer for BBC-TV. Brill, who has also worked as a director in theater and radio, served as Head of Development for the BBC-TV Series Department until he began producing full-time. He has produced a number of films for the BBC, and has also written screenplay adaptations of Stephen Fry's *The Hippopotamus* and Clive James' *Unreliable Memoirs*.

Gary Bakewell (Paul McCartney in BACKBEAT) was cast as Richard Mayhew, a character Gaiman likens to Arthur Dent, the hapless Englishman who sudden-

ly finds himself on a tour of the Universe after the Earth is destroyed in A HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY. It is through Richard's eyes that the audience encounters the peculiar and frightening denizens of London Below. "Richard's function in the plot is to walk four or five paces behind everybody else, saying things like, 'What? But I don't understand!'" Gaiman said. "And that can be incredibly tiresome. As the story goes on, you realize that it's a lot more than that; it's about Richard growing up. Gary came up to me a little way into making NEVERWHERE and said, 'I figured it out. Richard is you, isn't he?' I suppose there is definitely a level on which Richard Mayhew is an awful lot like me. But he's full of knocks, and Gary plays him as a far more frustrated individual than I ever am. Richard does a very noble deed: he finds a girl bleeding on the sidewalk, and in spite of his fiancée's telling him that they really ought to leave her behind and have the

meal with her boss, he takes the girl home with him. This catapults him into a whole world of trouble. He's become a complete un-person. He no longer exists in London above. He's now part of London below. I liked the idea that you can be one or the other part of London, but nobody gets both, and by helping this girl, by doing some things necessary to get her back home again, Richard was no longer part of the London that we see. It was a very nice for the metaphor. He's not invisible, it's just that people don't notice him anymore. These are the people you don't look at. You look somewhere else. I showed the first episode in rough form to Harlan Ellison, who smiled and said, 'Oh, I see, no good deed goes unpunished.' And that is, more or less, the story."

Door, the girl helped by Richard, is played by Scottish actress Laura Fraser, who Gaiman described as "wonderful and very funny. Door has been on the run with Mr. Croup and Mr. Vandemaar after her, trying to kill her too. There are really two stories running through NEVERWHERE. One is Door trying to find out who ordered her family killed and why, which she needs to find out in order to protect herself. The other is Richard's quest, having gone into the other London, to get his life back."

Many of the Below world characters encountered bear names taken right off a map of London. "We've taken a lot of London place names very literally," Gaiman said. "There's an angel called Islington, which is

a tube stop. Some of them I came up with from the name, working backwards. I've always wondered, who is the Earl of Earl's Court, and what is his court like? A lot of the characters, to be honest, were people who turned up on the page when I was writing. I'd suddenly need somebody to do something and very often they'd become very important and very nice characters."

Another place-turned-character is Old Bailey (Trevor Peacock), named after London's Central Criminal Court. Old Bailey has set up quarters on a rooftop overlooked by St. Paul's Cathedral, and like an elderly Papageno, swaddles himself in feathers and sells birds, as well as information.

Tracking Door's movements are a black-hearted pair of villains, the short, suave Mr. Croup (Hywel Bennet) and the tall, rat-munching Mr. Vandemar (Clive Russell). They are the Mr. Wint and Mr. Kidd of London Below, except they're even creepier than those two James Bond nasties, and they're certainly not mortal; prick them, and they do not bleed. They are two of Gaiman's oldest characters, first thought up when he was in his teens. They found a place in NEVERWHERE when Gaiman went through some papers and came upon a fragment of a children's story he had written nearly 20 years ago. "Mr. Croup and Mr. Vandemar are sitting in a cellar in one scene. They are exactly the same characters now as they were when I was 17. They've been sitting in my head, waiting for the right thing to come out. Sometimes I thought I'd use them in *Sandman*, but to my relief I never did that. But all of a sudden they came out here."

Richard's first encounter in London Below is with the Rat Speakers, who serve as the liaison between the humans and the Rats. The Rats underneath London have an old civilization, see things the humans



The Black Friars in Klink Street Vault, getting prepared for the "Ordeal." The Friars arm themselves with automatic weapons as guardians of a key Richard and Door must return to London Below's mystery man.

don't, and regard the humans as useful builders and bringers of food. Also wandering through the maze-like spaces below London are the vampire-like Velvets, pale, jet-haired women dressed in black velvet. "They don't actually sink their teeth into you and suck blood, but they do rather like taking your life, taking your warmth," Gaiman said. The Velvets sleep during the day in one huge hall, hanging upside down from the rafters like bats; in the evening they travel on the tube and walk the streets. Lamia, the chief Velvet, takes an unhealthy interest in Richard.

Richard's most significant encounter is with a group of black men in monks robes, the Black Friars (named after London's Blackfriars district). The leader of the Black Friars is a gentle blind abbot (Earl

Cameron). Despite their outward appearance, the Friars arm themselves with automatic weapons in their roles as guardians of a key that Richard and Door must bring back to London Below's most mysterious character, the Angel Islington.

An earthbound angel in NEVERWHERE should not be a surprise to Gaiman's fans, as fallen or earthbound angels are frequently recurring images in his work. Played by Peter Capaldi, writer and director of the Oscar-winning short film *FRANZ KAFKA'S IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE*, the slightly androgynous, enigmatic Angel dwells in a remote hall lined with candles that flame up as he passes by. To give the Angel an eerie, spiritual quality, Capaldi wore black contact lenses and a robe fashioned from a 3-M reflective fabric that in normal light appears a mousy gray, but on camera seems lit from within by a luminous white light.

NEVERWHERE's eight-week shoot began in February 1996 on locations all over London. Gaiman noted that the slender budget of \$2 1/2 million for the six half-hour episodes prevented the production company from shooting on sets for more than a few days. Instead, cast and crew ventured onto and under the streets of London. Rarely spending more than one or two days in any one place, they shot in dark, dank centuries-old tunnels, cellars and vaults, on the streets, in alleyways, courtyards, and warehouses, on fire escapes, bridges, and a ship. Occasionally unsuspecting Londoners witnessed scenes that must have seemed like something out of a dream, including one sequence that required the crew to carry the cameras and lights down 250 spiral stairs into an underground station abandoned after World War II. "We put a formal dinner for four people on twelve feet of tube platform and filmed it as the trains went by," Gaiman

Filming on location in the Klink Street Vaults, (left to right) Richard (Gary Bakewell) and Hunter with spear (Tanya Moodie). Centuries-old London streets helped create the otherworldly visuals of London Below.



said. "There was an article in the *London Times* a few days later about people stumbling off the Piccadilly line claiming to have seen these bizarre things going on in the tube."

Ironically, the very reality of the location shoots helped to create the otherworldly visuals of London Below. "We got the texture of this whole underground world by doing it for real," Gaiman explained. "It's one of the lovely things about NEVERWHERE. The trouble with most fantasy series and films set in underground tunnels is that they have normally 50 feet of tunnel on a sound stage which they will dress and re-dress for every time you walk down a tunnel. And pretty soon you start realizing you've been here before. You know the set. You've been round it three times. We didn't want that. In order to get the effect that we needed, we were in a different location every day of the shoot, and it was very unusual to be in the same place more than two days running. We didn't have the money to fake it convincingly, so we did it for real.

And that's really what it looks like. It looks like there is this whole other world under London."

Of course, even a perfect location needs a great deal of preparation from the creative staff. The combined talents of production designer James Dillon, costume designer Pam Downe, and makeup designer Shelagh Wells have combined to create a make-believe world whose eclecticism is inspired by a wide range of eras, places and styles. Each character and each location has its own look, united only in that no one, and no place, are definitely not part of the everyday world of London Above.

Because of the low budget, director of photography Steve Sanderson shot NEVERWHERE on video, the biggest project so far employing Sony's high-quality Digital Betacam format. Even though the show was shot on video, it was lit, according to Gaiman, as if it were recorded on film.

The title sequence for NEVERWHERE was designed by Dave McKean, a long-time friend and collaborator of Gaiman's who designed all the covers for *The Sandman* and illustrated their graphic novels *Black Orchid*, *Violent Cases*, *Mr. Punch* and *Signal-to-Noise*. McKean's NEVERWHERE titles look, said Gaiman, like McKean's dreamlike *Sandman* covers "if only they could move."

Innovative pop musician Brian Eno was Gaiman and Lenny Henry's first choice to compose NEVERWHERE's musical score, although they were convinced Eno would

"The BBC said, 'Can we do the next one cheaper?' We said, 'How much cheaper? Unless it's like glove puppets, it's hard to get much cheaper than we did it!'"



Lamia (Tamsin Grey) rehearses with director Dewi Humphries on location at St. Pancras Hotel in London. No U.S. airing has been set.

turn down the offer. But they decided to try and talk him into doing it, and to their delight, Eno immediately signed on. "We said, 'But of course, there'll be no money in it, because it's the BBC,' and he said, 'There never is for things you want to do, is there?' And he was on board. He astonished us both. It was lovely. I was tremendously pleased that Eno agreed to do the music."

Not only is NEVERWHERE Gaiman's first television series, it is his first work written for any kind of dramatic presentation, with his dialogue to be spoken by actors instead of lettered into comic book balloons. The main difference between writing for comics and for television, he said, is that in comics he always has to consider how the story will break down into panels. In television, "You can say the doorbell rings, so-and-so gets up to answer it, without having to worry about, 'Oh God, I've got two panels, how do I do this? Shall I show him pressing the doorbell and somebody opening it, or a long-shot of the guy coming down the corridor?'" It was just easier." Television also gave Gaiman the opportunity to write more dialogue. "And I got to cut it all, of course," he noted. "The thing that comics have over TV is you never hand in a script and then get an artist coming back to you and saying, 'Thank you for turning in this 24-page script. I'm afraid the scene in page 15 is only half there because I ran out of time on that location. The character you had talking to these

people has disappeared on page 13 because he broke his leg climbing down the manhole, so I've replaced him with another character pretty much at random. By the way, once I drew it, it turned out to be 28 pages, not 24 pages, so I've randomly removed four pages from it.' Those are things that all happen more or less in television that never happen in comics. In comics, I'll write a 24-page script and somebody will draw 24 pages."

Guilt, said Gaiman, was his reaction to seeing his story and his dialogue come alive before his eyes. "For example, we had this location called The Floating Market, a place where all the inhabitants of the underside can get together in a state of truce, and it moves around. At one point we were on the huge gunship deck of the *H.M.S. Belfast*, a World War II gunship moored in the Thames down by Tower Bridge. We put a street market on the deck, and then we put hundreds of cool London extras, some of them pierced, some of them dressed

in the strangest and weirdest ways, and I walked around feeling vaguely guilty. All the time and trouble that people had gone to, just because I'd had an idea. In comics and in literature, it doesn't really matter what you write. It's never any more effort than anything else is. For the TV show, I write stuff and expect them to say, 'Well, we can't do it.' But they do, and you discover the incredible amount of effort that goes into it.

"I liked the idea that the Angel Islington lives in a huge, strange hall filled with candles, and as he walks towards the camera, the candles light, with no hand lighting them as he passes. I said, 'Oh, wouldn't that be pretty.' I'd watch them do take after take, where these huge candles, each with a tiny dynamite charge attached to the wick, set off as the Angel walks past. It was so cold Peter Capaldi's breath was steaming. He was barefoot, walking on cast iron in this old sewage pumping station in the east of London. By the end of so many takes, he was throwing up. I felt strangely responsible. And then I didn't, because I can't believe in it, since they tear it down and do something else the next day."

The BBC has already brought up the subject of a second series of NEVERWHERE episodes, although exactly how many, and what the budget would be, remains undetermined. "Being the BBC of course, they're also saying, 'Can we do the next one cheaper?'" Gaiman laughed. "And

we said, "Well, how much cheaper? Unless we're doing it like little glove puppets or something, it's a bit hard to get much cheaper than we did it for!" This isn't a soap, where you build a set and it gets cheaper, or where 13 episodes are cheaper than six because you've got the same set for 13 episodes. It won't work like that."

Despite the BBC's thrift, Gaiman, who thinks of himself primarily as a storyteller whatever medium he works in, greatly prefers the limited series approach of English television to the American format, where series will run forever as long as ratings are high enough. "For me the joy of English television is that you've got something that has a beginning, a middle and an end, and then it stops," he said. "Maybe in a year or two years' time you will come back and do another six or another 13. But there's no goal to get into syndication, or to keep it going forever. When it's done, it's done. This allows you to tell stories that don't turn into soap opera. I have no idea what we'll do in series two. It's quite possible that we might start again with a completely different cast. We might take somebody else into this world. We might take some minor characters from NEVERWHERE and make them the major characters in the next series. I don't know. And I like not knowing. I like the fact that there's no demands on us to do anything other than another good story."

British viewers went through a NEVERWHERE blitz last fall, with the BBC releasing the series on home video in the United Kingdom at the same time it aired on television, and Gaiman touring around the British Isles to promote a novel version of the show. The novel is his first solo work in that format. Why write NEVERWHERE as a novel? "The most honest answer," Gaiman said, "is that I wanted the director's cut. There's stuff that we lost because we didn't have room for it, or because we couldn't get the location, or it wasn't physically possible. But it's completely possible in prose. There were really two options: I could write a novel, or somebody else could do a novelization. And I liked the idea of getting to do my novel. NEVERWHERE is a real novel. It doesn't look or feel like a novelization. I wrote in collaboration with the guy who wrote the script. We just happen to share the same head."

Americans are still awaiting a sale of NEVERWHERE to a U.S. channel. They may very well read the story before they see it. A slightly different version of the novel is scheduled to be published in the U.S. this spring, with extended descriptions of London locales unfamiliar to most readers on this side of the Atlantic, and elimination of some of the more obscure British terms (obscure to Americans, that is). With any luck, the series itself will find a hold on U.S. television before much more time passes by. □



Above: Old Bailey (Trevor Peacock) sells birds and information on the rooftops of London. Below: The Earl of Earls court (Freddie Jones) on throne, holding court in London Below on his private subway car.



SINBAD

Ed Naha's new weekly adventures evoke the spirit of classic Harryhausen.

By Gary Kimber

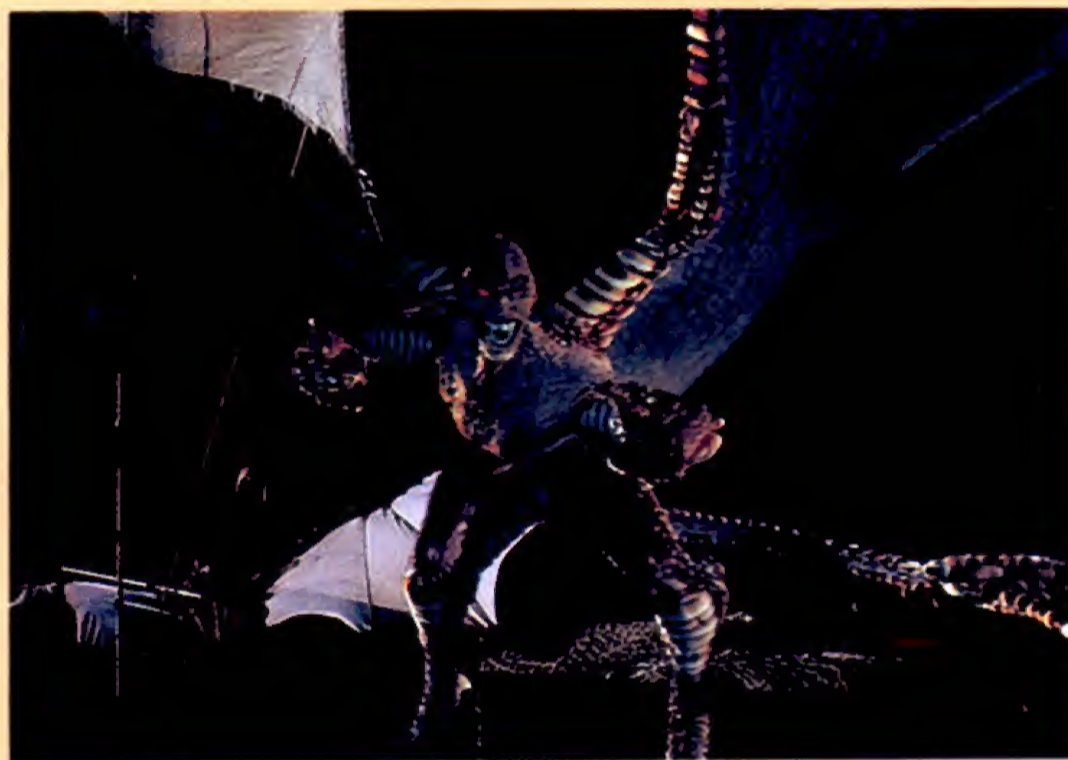
More than 20 years have passed since the last Ray Harryhausen Sinbad adventure graced the screen, *SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER* in 1976. Now audiences get treated to the formula on the small screen in weekly one-hour doses featuring monsters, magic and entertainment for the family hour.

Created by Ed Naha and produced by a partnership between All American Television (BAYWATCH) and Atlantis Films Limited (TWILIGHT ZONE, RAY BRADBURY THEATRE), the syndicated series is shot in South Africa.

For Naha, screenwriter of *HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS*, the series is the culmination of a childhood dream, nurtured since learning about Harryhausen at age 11 from an issue of *Famous Monsters of Filmland*.

"I thought, hey, this is what I want to do," reminisced Naha. "When I was 11 or 12 I made a couple of abortive attempts at 8mm moviemaking using stop motion. Almost burned the house down a couple of times," he chuckled. "My parents were real happy I decided to write."

Naha became a writer in college, covering film publications as diverse as *Starlog*, *Rolling Stone* and *Heavy Metal*. "I eventually came out to Los Angeles where I worked for Roger Corman," said Naha. "I still wanted to do something with Sinbad. I would mention it to people and they would look at me like I was retarded. I was at



Sinbad faces a Harryhausen-inspired CGI Harpy, by Calibre Designs. Despite new techniques, it was hard not to pay homage to stop-motion's grand master.

Disney for three years after *HONEY I SHRUNK THE KIDS* came out and thought this would be perfect. If anything, that was a Harryhausen film, so I thought Disney would get it. No one got it. Everyone said, 'Yeah, yeah. Fine.'

When Naha's contract was up with Disney, he shopped *SINBAD* to every major studio in Hollywood in the late '80s and early '90s, but had no takers. "Meanwhile, I was looking at what Columbia Pictures was doing with the Harryhausen tapes," said Naha. "Re-releasing them with different covers every three years." In fact, last year saw the release of a three box set of his Sinbad trilogy. That confirmed the commercial viability of the concept for Naha. "I thought, yes, people do want to see Sinbad."

But as late as mid-1995 Naha was still getting turned down

from the majors. "A year ago I had a TV deal with Tri-Star and pitched it to them and was told in no uncertain terms it was a ridiculous notion. I pointed out a market exists for period fantasy adventure as *HERCULES* has proven. Still, no deal."

The deal for the series got cemented just a week later, almost by accident. "I went for a 'Hello, how are you' meeting at All American Television," said Naha. "Jake Waldren, a V.P., said they were thinking about doing a fantasy adventure series with someone like Sinbad. A week later I am in the office of David Gerber, President of All American. He loves the old swashbuckling films with Errol Flynn and Douglas Fairbanks. So I sold it like that," Naha exclaimed. "All I had written at that point was an outline and little scenes for the actors to audition. Then he [Gerber] struck a

deal with Atlantis and Tribune syndication in February. I was just totally flummoxed."

The very name Sinbad evokes a world of magic and wonder of a day gone by, where good triumphs over evil and life was simpler. "Not to sound corny, but we live in a time period where there are not many heroes," said Naha. "When I was growing up there were clearly defined heroes and villains. The entertainment business has been caught up in this cultural blur. Not many old fashioned heroes are left. Sinbad represents a man of honor and a zest for life.

"What we are doing is a little different from the Harryhausen films in that we will have a contemporary personality. No offense to Kerwin Mathews, who I thought was the best Sinbad. In the big screen adventures, excepting Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Sinbad was a reactive role. He would go on a mission, react in a stoic, stilted manner. Good with a sword but not people. Kind of a one note character.

"Our Sinbad (played by Zen Gesner of *DUMB AND DUMBER*) loves adventure purely for the sake of adventure. Unlike the movies, we surround him with crew members who form almost a family. Doubar is his big brother. Imagine Hoss Cartwright on a boat—strong as an ox. Rongar [is a shipmate], whose tongue has been cut out for not betraying his brother in battle. His presence is felt in the strangest ways, like a touchstone. Firouz is a friend and inventor of sorts. A Celtic woman,



(L to R): Jaqueline Collen as Maeve, Zen Gesner as Sinbad and George Boza as Doubar, in weekly syndication, co-produced by Atlantis Films and All American.

Maeve, is a sorcerer's apprentice. Her goal is to learn enough magic to destroy the sorcerer who changed her younger brother Dermot into a hawk."

The legend of Sinbad, the Sailor is based on the experiences of Basra (Iraq) merchants trading under great risk in the East Indies and China in 750-850 AD. Chronicled as part of a cycle of stories in *The 1001 Nights*, the seven voyages of Sinbad were obviously embellished with fanciful tales of great hairy apes, an island that turns out to be a man and a Cyclops.

Series creator Ed Naha was inspired by Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion work and includes weekly encounters with creatures of fantasy, like this CGI serpent.



Stories for the show will not be taken directly from the 1001 Nights due to its age and style. "It's tough sledding" admitted Naha. "Very antiquated in terms of storytelling. The moralizing hits you over the head like an anvil. We rely more on world mythology. Sandy, my assistant majored in world folklore.

"We are putting a '90s spin on it. I will probably end up writing six to eight episodes of the first season. Some of what is being written is based on little outlines I came up with at the beginning of the show. I sit

CREATOR ED NAHA

"Unlike the movies, we surround [Sinbad] with crew members who form almost a family. Doubar is his big brother. Imagine Hoss Cartwright on a boat—strong as an ox."

down with the writers and we work everything out together." Some of the outside writers involved include Michael Cassutt (*OUTER LIMITS*, *TWILIGHT ZONE*), John Shirley (*SP/Horror* novelist), and John Lafia (*CHILD'S PLAY MAN'S BEST FRIEND*). "To the extent they need it I will be re-writing the scripts."

Noted Naha, about filming in South Africa, "There are so many weird variables to this show. We have bought every piece of drapery for palace scenes in Capetown. If we need more, guys have to schlepp a hundred miles. An exterior set of our Arabian town in Baghdad province is over a city block long. We built the top half of Sinbad's boat full size with a barge underneath so we could float it on the ocean. When we had gale force winds two weeks ago, that was real wind taking apart our real sails."

Genuine enthusiasm bubbles from Ed Naha over all this activity surrounding his creation. "I have the feeling this is what it was like to work at the studios when Ray Harryhausen or George Pal or the Kordas were mounting a theatrical. Basically, they said okay, you have six weeks, here's the budget, there's the soundstage, run and do it."

Although the name Harryhausen hangs over the production like the god he is in the fantasy film pantheon, stop-motion animation plays no role in the show's monster evocations. This, in spite of the mini-comeback engendered in its use in Henry Sellick's *THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS* and *JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH*. Naha explained the whyfores. "Initially I envisioned the effects being stop-motion. It is impossible to do on a show like this one. We could have done it by not filming for a year—a year's worth of scripts written in advance

with everything mapped out. It is one of those time consuming techniques where you are always going to be behind when filming on a tight schedule."

Instead Toronto's Calibre Designs will use computer animation to create such beasts as a sea serpent, a king-size harpy, two smaller female harpies and a giant formed from falling rocks, all in the special two-hour debut episode. "The hardest thing to get right is the skin texture so it doesn't look hokey," said Naha. "You want them to look like the monsters in *MYSTERIOUS ISLAND*, not the ones in *JACK THE GIANT KILLER*. The stop-motion in that looked like they took a stroll out of Toys R' Us. So far the animation I have seen from Calibre is beautiful." In the planning stages are a dragon-type creature, water sprites, dust devils, flying carpets used for fly-by robberies, a shrunken Sinbad and a special homage to Harryhausen, a diabolical battle with skeleton warriors. □

Calibre Designs CGI Rock Titan. Stop-motion wasn't feasible on a TV budget and schedule.



COMING

By Dan Persons

It's sort of like the Lone Ranger around here these days: we seem to be top-heavy with mysterious strangers. We've already told you about the folks founding that out-of-nowhere production company, Grand Design, who seem to be moving forward with at least one of their feature projects (at least it's been publicized in industry press) but who still haven't scraped it together to forward us some stills from their allegedly impressive short-film-cum-audition-reel debut, *FOR THE CAUSE...* This time around, we've got one guy whose pro-



Sweetpea Entertainment is developing *THE TRAVELLER*, a series based on the role-playing game. Spaceship designs by Chris Foss.



duction company has yet to produce a single frame of film, but whose snapping up of high-profile genre licenses seems to have caught the attention of one of Hollywood's major players; and another guy who, though he does boast a more solid track record, also possesses such a bizarre view of the world in general and the art of film in specific that it renders him one of the industry's major enigmas. Mysteries weird and wonderful indeed. Break out your decoder rings and please follow:

INTO THE TIGHTS AND ONTO THE SCREEN: TAKE, UH, TWO.

Courtney Solomon seems to be auditioning for irresistible force. A while ago, we told you how he (and a Canadian investor based in Hong Kong) picked up the feature rights to *DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS* for his newly formed Sweetpea Entertainment production company. Now, he's not only grabbed all rights to another RPG classic, *THE TRAVELLER*, and is planning to launch what he terms a "high-brow horror-thriller franchise" with something called *THE DESCENDANT*, he's also swung an

agreement with Disney to pick up the live-action rights to Image Comics' hit title *GEN 13*. Objective: a full-length feature sometime in 1998.

It was, in fact, after the first crack at a script for *DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS* led to a proposed budget of \$110 million and the placing of the project into temporary turnaround (more on that later), that Solomon came by Image's tale of super-teens on the run from a secret government agency. Said Solomon, "One day, I just said, 'You know, I want to go see what's out on the market,' so I went to the comic book store on the weekend and picked up *everything* that was on the stand. I picked up one issue of each thing, and I spent the weekend reading. It was sort of like a fun thing as well. And I came across *Gen 13*; it just totally stood out.

"What's great about these kids is they have no idea at the beginning of the story that they have any super powers. Their parents were the product of a government experiment 20 years earlier, and now, 20 years later, the experiment has been opened up again, and these kids come in and they just think they're going through this summer internship program. They start getting put through all these tests and one day their powers just manifest out. Then they realize through somebody who doesn't agree with what's going on that the agency is actually bad, and what they're intending for these kids to do is not very

good. So the kids escape and become like these teenage super-hero fugitives on the run from the government, which is kind of cool."

So cool, in fact, that—as we noted a few months ago—the story was already under production as a made-for-video animated feature under the direction of Kevin Altieri. According to Solomon, Disney has picked up the rights to the animated effort—which was produced independently by *GEN 13* creator Jim Lee's Wildstorm Productions—for distribution through their video arm. "You've got to look at it as two different worlds," said Solomon of the prospect of releasing two films with essentially the same story. "The origins are going to stay the same, but the kids are going to see the animation first, and if they like it, they're going to be thrilled to go and see it brought

to life in a live-action form in a much larger event. The direct-to-video animated movie is there to fit into its marketplace and fit into its niche and also maybe expand the pre-awareness of these characters a little bit with the younger demographic. But the real plan and the real thrust is to be behind the live-action feature and turn it into a much larger-reaching franchise."

Even as *GEN 13* is getting under way, Solomon is trying to get *DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS* back on track. Having previously caught the attention of the likes of James Cameron and Francis Ford Coppola in its previous, pricey incarnation, the script is now undergoing a rewrite to knock the price out of the *WATERWORLD* stratosphere and back down to something reasonable. At the same time, Sweetpea is prepping *THE DESCENDANT*, the aforementioned high-brow horror-thriller about the power-hungry offspring of Rasputin, based on a script received in response to, believe it or not, a blind ad placed in *Variety*.

Equally intriguing is Sweetpea's acquisition of *The Traveller*, the classic, science-fiction role-playing game which was recently re-released with new, and quite impressive, art by Chris Foss. Solomon has entered into an agreement with Rob Liefeld's Extreme Studios for a comic book to be released sometime in the next few months, with the ultimate goal a weekly TV series. "It's a very different take," says Solomon, "than, say, *STAR TREK* or *STAR WARS*. The real, core

ATTRACTIONS

science fiction fans know it, and they really look at it up on that same level, because it's sophisticated and it's intelligent. There are no defined characters there, but there's a very defined universe; really what Mark Miller, the creator, has done is create a hundred thousand years of future history, and he's divided them into 16 different eras. That's kind of cool, because when I look at it, I think to myself, *Well, if your TV series flies, then you've got everything pre-done to go to a STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION or DEEP SPACE NINE spin-off...* You're still keeping the main foundation, but you're moving into a different time period. It's very hard to find a property that's like that."

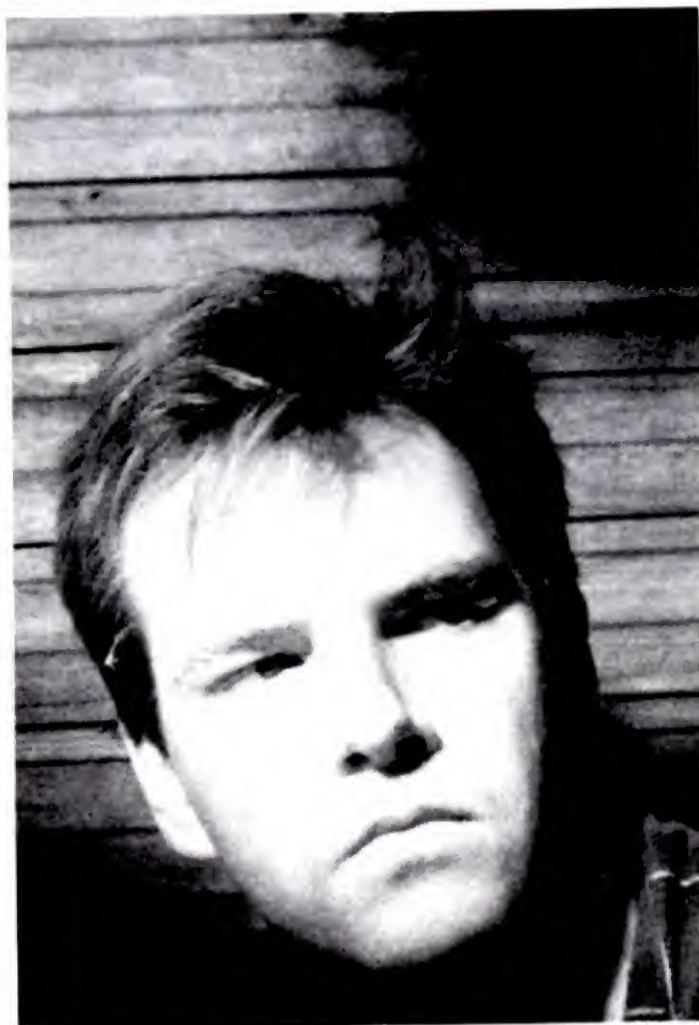
In the most optimistic game-plan, a GEN 13 script will be completed in the next few months and before the camera by the third quarter of this year. Meantime, in keeping with the buying streak, Sweetpea has acquired the rights to this column, with the intention of spinning it off into a two-minute interstitial for the TV Food Network. Guess I won't be retiring quite as soon as I wished.

GREETINGS FROM CANADA: GATEWAY TO UNIVERSE Z

Brace yourself, Guy Maddin's at it again. The Canadian filmmaker—whose previous efforts, including *TALES FROM THE GIMLI HOSPITAL* and *CAREFUL*, blended a sort of innovative, neo-Victorian dread with the style of early-sound-era cinema—has wrapped on his latest project, *TWILIGHT OF THE ICE NYMPHS*. Shot in Winnipeg, the film will be distributed by Alliance Releasing up there, and is still looking for a distributor here in the States.

Scripted by previous Maddin collaborator George Toles (the first time, in fact, that Maddin has not contributed to a script himself) and featuring a high-profile cast—including Shelley Duvall (*THE SHINING*), Mr. Riddler Frank Gorshin and the Borg Queen herself, Alice Krige—*TWILIGHT* tells the tale of, according to the press notes, the "residents of an ostrich bestiary [who] encounter the delirium of unrequited love during a summer when the sun just won't set."

Explained Maddin, somewhat dramatically, "I think that the delirium in the movie is pitched at about the level that I remember it being for first love experiences, where everything is magnified. I wanted the movie to take place in perpetual daylight, where no one could hide in a pool of shadows, where nothing could be hidden; quite the opposite, where everything is perhaps seen too clearly and paranoia sets in. The fever of paranoia seems to be the tenor of the day... the everlasting day."



TWILIGHT OF THE ICE NYMPHS' director
Guy Maddin in Winnipeg, hard at work
reinventing the game of basketball.

Keeping up a tradition carried over from *CAREFUL*, where the production shot in an abandoned grain elevator whose daytime temperature reached oven-like extremes, Maddin based his shoot on another "sound stage" that easily matches the film itself for surreal intensity. "We're recording it in the old Vulcan Iron Works steel mill, where the 1919 Winnipeg general strike started," said Maddin, who, judging by his description, may have warmed to the locale more than he'd care to admit. "It's one of our most dilapidated and run-down buildings, right in the heart of our most troubled neighborhood. The train tracks around which our city was founded rumble literally within feet of the building where we work, so we have the same crummy sound conditions. Plus it's baby pigeon season, evidently, and you can constantly hear them crying, crying, crying over the industrial sound. And we share the building with a soap bubble factory and an Ab-Roller manufacturer, so there are all these clanks and gurgles as well. We've been forced just to record guide tracks, and then the actors will just be re-performing their lines. It's a very liberating way of making a movie, actually."

Another tradition maintained from previous shoots was Maddin's determination to keep work hours somewhere within the realm of sensibility. Most shooting days lasted no longer than nine hours, not only allowing everyone to recover from the ar-

duous filming conditions, but also, amazingly, to kick back and socialize a bit. According to Maddin, though, even this activity seemed to have fallen under his spell: "Last Saturday we quit at about three in the afternoon, but just kept hangin' out. I've never seen people hang around work so long. I think some Canadian invented basketball; I think we're reinventing it here, for some reason. No one can play, we've literally drilled a basket against the wall, just a basket, and someone found a spherical thing and we're starting to try to sink them all the time, and a game has evolved with just one basket and a bunch of actors and technicians and things. I found out that even on work nights, even though we finish early sometimes, while it's still light, people are still playing our new, hundred-year-old version of reinvented basketball until two or three in the morning every night, and then back at work at seven.

"It's kind of a peculiar thing. I haven't been playing every night, but I find some of the people just sleeping in the studio in puddles of beer and deflated balls and stale donuts. It's pretty odd."

TRAILERS

Let's see what else we can squeeze in here... Director Terry Gilliam and writer Richard LaGravenese are re-teaming on *THE DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE*, another Camelot-tinged fantasy about a gumshoe whose only clue to the whereabouts of a missing girl is a mysterious book about a stalwart knight. Production company is Paramount; Nicolas Cage is being sought for the lead... Harry Harrison's *Stainless Steel Rat* series may be coming to the screen. Producer Bill McCutchen has acquired the rights... Disney's dealing with a bunch of big monkeys. No, I'm not talking about Mike Ovitz's secretarial staff, I mean the re-make of *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG*, to be directed by Ron Underwood. Monkey fan Rick Baker is doing the makeup effects for the latter. With *GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE* also on the slates, they may have to use the profits from the projects just to get the stink out of the soundstages...

How many versions of *THE BORROWERS* are there? Seems I remember at least two, both made for TV. There's another one as well, now; this time a feature version directed by Peter Hewitt and starring John Goodman and Hugh Laurie. As if working for Roseanne didn't make Goodman feel small enough... Sequels are coming: *THE NUTTY PROFESSOR*'s follow-up is being scripted by Steve Oedekerk; star Eddie

continued on page 62

- Must See
- Excellent
- Good
- Mediocre
- Poor

ALIEN TERMINATOR

Directed by Dave Payne. Cinemax (cable TV), 10/96, 82 mins. With: Maria Ford, Rodger Halston, Emile Levisette, Bob McFarland, Cassandra Leigh, Kevin Alber.

Utterly unoriginal if uncredited remake of ALIEN set in an underground science lab where six scientists have been sealed in for two years. Unbeknownst to five of them, the remaining one is working on a secret project for the U.S. government to create an unstoppable, violent soldier. On the next to last day of the two years, he succeeds, but by this time he's so stoned out on crystal meths that it easily escapes the lab and gets loose in the installation, using the human beings as a host while it evolves from a rat-sized slimy thing to a barely glimpsed seven-foot creature.

The script is bare bones over which the cast fails to flesh out any living characters; they are all whiny and immature and you won't like being locked in with them for even 82 minutes, let alone two years. The various stages of the creature are barely seen, so one can only imagine what an amateurish job Horror Lab/Cumberland FX must have done in creating them. The name of the experiment is Alien Intruder so it's possible this film was intended to have that title, but an even more awful 1992 film of that name already exists.

○ Judith Harris

BLOOD HUNTER

Directors: Jack Shrum and Chuck Ellis. Cabin Productions (video), 7/96, 90 min. With: Jack Shrum, Chuck Ellis, Cynthia Hudson.

This is a boring, amateur-level vampire film shot in Kentucky and Nebraska on a minimal budget. While the low budget shows in more ways than one, the technical flaws (including at least one scene in which the dialogue is badly out of sync) are not this film's biggest problem. BLOOD HUNTER is hard to watch because it is excruciatingly slow-paced (and the lethargic editing doesn't help), badly acted, and poorly written. Viktor (co-director Jack Shrum) is a Russian emigre vampire who—after living in the caves underneath Kentucky for several centuries—finally decides to come to the surface and get a job as an automobile mechanic in a junkyard. He starts killing (mostly) bad people, which brings down the wrath of the fat town sheriff (co-director Chuck Ellis), who eventually stakes the bloodsucking foreigner (although in a typical pointless "surprise" ending, we see Viktor up to his old tricks at the end). Aside from the two principals, the acting (for want of a better term) is terrible, but Laurence Olivier and Robert DeNiro couldn't have saved this film. The professional-looking video box might fool the unwary, but the box is



THE STENDHAL SYNDROME, horror-as-art or the new pornography. Asia Argento gets slashed with a razorblade in a brutal rape sequence directed by her father.

the slickest thing about BLOOD HUNTER.

○ David Wilt

CARNOSAUR 3: PRIMAL SPECIES

Director Jonathan Winfry. Concorde-New Horizons Home Video, 10/96, 85 mins. With: Scott Valentine, Janet Gunn, Morgan Englund, Rick Dean.

If there's anything I want to see succeed it's a dinosaur movie. But, Roger Corman's CARNOSAUR franchise just flounders along with this latest entry. Although a notch above the last film, CARNOSAUR III doesn't rise above the material. There's carnage aplenty as first a group of terrorists massacres a detachment of soldiers escorting a shipment of frozen raptors and a tyrannosaurus to a top-secret installation and then the voracious creatures dispatch the hijackers and a contingent of cops. Finally a special crack squad is sent after the monsters. Oh, and just one thing: orders are not to kill them!

Director Jonathan Winfry is ambushed by his cast and the bottom-of-the-barrel dinosaur effects. The pasty-faced Scott Valentine is unconvincing as Colonel Rance Higgins. As leader of the dino hit squad, Valentine barks orders that make no sense to either him or his men. When faced with stupidity, he heads right for it. As Higgins' right-hand man, Rick Dean is as dumb as they come. Unfortunately, he can't decide whether he's the comedy relief or a psycho, a part he played to the hilt in STRIPTEASER.

Any prehistoric monster movie depends heavily on convincing visual effects. Here, Winfry tries his best to hide the effects behind quick cuts, blurred vision and an annoying negative POV used in attack sequences. John Carl Buechler's creature effects are so dated they look prehistoric. Standing alone in a corner the models look neat, but the obvious lack of sufficient articulation destroys the illusion of life and all you have are props.

The film is salvaged somewhat by

Winfry's brisk pace and frequent bloodletting, but the lack of effects set pieces prevents the film from rising above the mundane.

●● Dan Scapperotti

THE DENTIST

Directed by Brian Yuzna. HBO (cable TV), 10/96, 89 mins. With: Corbin Bernsen, Linda Hoffman, Molly Hagan, Ken Foree, Virginia Keehn.

This is a relentlessly mean-spirited film about a perfectionist, pill-addicted dentist who is pathologically obsessed with decay. He spots his younger, attractive wife making love with the pool man and snaps. Over the next two days he manages to kill or disgustingly maim most of his patients and staff before police catch on and finally trap him. Corbin Bernsen is actually quite good as the nasty title character, but like most films of this type, there is nothing more to the plot than a string of grisly deaths with gruesome makeup (this time by Anthony C. Ferrante). Three people worked on this script, among them Dennis Paoli and Stuart Gordon, who have both done better work previously.

○ Judith Harris

MARVIN THE MARTIAN IN THE THIRD DIMENSION

Directed by Douglas McCarthy. Warner Bros. 10/96, 12 mins. Voices: Joe Alaskey.

And how many funny things can you think of to do with 3D? MARVIN THE MARTIAN IN THE THIRD DIMENSION, the computer-animated short that Warner Bros. premiered in their flagship, Fifth Avenue retail-store-cum-mini-theme park—plus several locations in Europe—comes up with exactly one: a shot of a minuscule Daffy Duck dwarfed by a humongous poster of Bugs Bunny. Director Douglas McCarthy throws a tad too much 3D bric-a-brac at his audience, but the fact is that the cartoon—in which Marvin spies Daffy rehearsing some lines for a Duck Dodgers film and mistakes the overheated dialogue for an impending invasion of Mars (upshot: inter-

planetary kidnappings, high-speed motorcycle chases, and giant mutant, metal, cyberbird warriors, natch)—actually feels like a Looney Tune, the circa-1955, Chuck Jones kind. The characters appear to have been cel-animated and zapped into their 3D surroundings (with only the straight dialogue sequences betraying their machine origins), and the gags, some of them quite funny, could have passed muster in any of the original cartoons. Most engaging character: a flying saucer with gawky sneakered landing gear and teeny-tiny bat wings. A credible return to a classic style, via newfangled technology. Could we have some more, please?

●● Dan Persons

RELIC

Directed by Peter Hyams. Paramount Pictures, 106 mins. With: Penelope Ann Miller, Tom Sizemore, James Whitmore, Linda Hunt.

Stunning sets, an impressive cast and a Stan Winston monster combine to hide the fact that this is basically a Roger Corman monster-on-the-loose movie. Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child, the authors of the novel, had fashioned a tight little thriller with several interesting characters. It took four screenwriters adapting the novel to eviscerate the book, but the monster story is intact.

A strange deity known as Kothoga, from an isolated South American tribe, appears to be ripping open people's heads to eat a part of the brain it finds particularly tasty. After a few bodies turn up at the local natural history museum (New York in the novel, Chicago in the film), the JAWS-like confrontation between cop and politicians rears its head with common sense giving way to political expedience.

Penelope Ann Miller (THE SHADOW'S Margo Lane) plays evolutionary biologist Margo Green who desperately tries to unravel the secret of the creature and the strange plant that has been shipped to the museum. She eventually drops her studious facade and becomes a tough cookie with a Ripley complex. The sensible side of the law is played by Tom Sizemore as Lt. Vincent D'Agosta whose character is composed of both the book's D'Agosta and an F.B.I. agent. Gone are most of the human conflicts that helped bridge the gaps between monster attacks in the book. The three museum officials who conspire to keep the museum open are condensed into a single character, Ann Cuthbert, played by diminutive Linda Hunt.

The monster itself, a combination of animatronics and CGI, created by Stan Winston, is a hideous beast that continues to attack his victim even when bathed in flame, a spectacular sequence. With the great number of monster films being relegated to video releases, it's a welcome change to see a big budget production fit for theatre screens.

●● Dan Scapperotti

THE SILENCERS

Directed by Joseph Merhi. PM Home Video, 93 mins. With: Jack Scalia, Dennis Christopher, Clarence Williams III, Carlos Lachu.

In a nod to THE X FILES, Jack

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Scalia portrays a secret service agent who finds himself up against "The Men In Black," (referred to here as MIBs) the legendary figures who supposedly appear after major UFO sightings to pressure witnesses into silence. This time out they are presented as actual aliens, indestructible assassins out to snuff anyone who might stand in the way of their planned invasion of Earth. It seems the US government has been helping them build a dimensional portal in exchange for technological advice. Of course, the real purpose of the portal is to bring to Earth their evil forces, hokily named the Black League of Orion. Aiding Scalia is a 370-year-old good-guy alien named Condor, who looks like a surfer, talks like a New Age philosopher and acts like Jeff Bridges in a far better movie.

As is typical for a PM video production, the film features several strong action set-pieces, with the standout being an exciting car chase that leads to a fight on a speeding oil tanker. The sequence is executed with big-budget precision, but it remains essentially uninvolved within the fragmented context. Inexplicably, characters appear and disappear almost randomly.

Basically an amalgam of *STAR-MAN*, *THE HIDDEN* and *STAR-GATE*, *THE SILENCERS* is fitfully intriguing, but more frequently incomprehensible. It squanders a decent idea, along with capable and charismatic performers like Scalia, Dennis Christopher and Clarence Williams III, by putting the emphasis

on action, rather than characters and story.

● John Thonen

THE STENDHAL SYNDROME

Directed by Dario Argento. Medusa Films (Italy). 120 mins. Screened at Toronto's Festival of the Festival (1996). With: Asia Argento, Thomas Kretschmann, Marco Leonardi, John Quentin.

Dario Argento still subscribes to a heavy-handed approach that substitutes excess for suspense. As his career has progressed, Argento has wallowed in blood and gore more and more. *THE STENDHAL SYNDROME*, his latest entry, does not try to be funny, though some of his visual effects draw laughter. One memorable moment was an animated shot of pills going down the leading lady's gullet. The character in question is Anna Manni, a policewoman in Italy tracking a terrifying rapist/murderer. She sees him at an art gallery, but the centuries-old masterpieces are causing her hallucinations. Classics by Botticelli, Rembrandt and others melt and metamorphosize, drawing her into them. During one of her hallucinations, she is raped, but we do not realize until later that the rape did occur, and the killer is still at large. In the interim, the experience has changed Anna. She cuts off her hair, and begins to act and dress more like a man. Her strength increases and we think she is going to become a figure that cannot be terrorized by a man. She has around-the-clock police escorts. When the inevitable return of the killer takes place, we see that her strength is not enough. Argento has fooled us.

Unfortunately, Argento only demonstrates his ability to manipulate our emotions, sicken us and surprise us. Did the rape of Anna have to include graphic shots of her stalker slashing her face with a razor blade? I find gratuitous gore obtrusive and needless. Some of the most horrifying films ever made had most of the real violence take place off camera, to much greater effect. It takes a great director to accomplish true suspense. Argento has style, but no restraint. The acting isn't bad, but Argento's visual payoffs undercut the credibility of his film as art, because they make the characters into clowns. The serious subject matter, taken so lightly, and dwelled on so lovingly by the camera, is rendered exploitative in the process.

Argento fans will probably love this. Others beware.

○ Paul Wardle

TIMEMASTER.

Writer-director: James Glickenhaus. MCA Home Video, 7/96. 100 minutes. With: Jesse Cameron-Glickenhaus, Noriyuki Morita, Joanna Pacula, Duncan Regehr, Michael Dorn, Michelle Williams.

TIMEMASTER is not a bad little family-oriented time-traveling science fiction film with action set-pieces. It pays homage to everything from *MAD MAX* movies to *ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE*, from westerns to kung fu epics, while retaining its own sense of liveliness and fun. The film opens in a post-apocalyptic 2007 when most of the world has been destroyed by the bomb. Jesse (Jesse Cameron-Glickenhaus) is a young boy whose parents are arbitrarily

selected to become contestants in a virtual reality game that serves as the primary source of entertainment in a faraway galaxy. Losers in the game have their lifeforce literally drained out of them in order to extend the lives of others.

One of the Collectors," Isaiah (Nonyuki Morita of *KARATE KID* fame) takes pity on the boy and is allowed to teach him the secrets of time and dimension. Jesse goes into the past where he meets up with Annie (Michelle Williams), and together they conspire to save Jesse's parents and the future by preventing the nuclear devastation from ever occurring. In the process, they must make many hair's breadth escapes and come face to face with the Chairman (Michael Dorn), the master of the game who callously creates devastation and conflict using the populace of other planets as pawns to provide amusement for his games.

Writer-director James Glickenhaus is an experienced exploitation action director (*THE EXTERMINATOR*; *McBAIN*) who provides some good action set-pieces for the project which he originally wrote 12 years ago. The film has a more handsome look than most SGE projects, thanks to some decent special effects and Stephen M. Katz's colorful cinematography. The special laserdisc edition of the film features audio commentary from Glickenhaus as well as a bonus DVD disc with trailers, an electronic press kit, and behind-the-scenes interviews with the principal players.

●● Dennis Fischer

LETTERS

CARPENTER'S THOUGHTLESS NIHILISM

I couldn't agree with you less about the ending of *ESCAPE FROM L.A.* being an improvement over the rotten ending to *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* [28:6]. In *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* we are told that an audio cassette is vitally important to keep the U.S. from being embroiled in a major war, but Plissken petulantly substitutes the Cabbie's "American Bandstand" tape apparently because the President, who had been kidnapped and tortured, neglected to say thank you after being rescued, such petty concerns being more important to Plissken than the lives of countless soldiers.

But *ESCAPE FROM L.A.* is much worse. It's bad enough that the film borrows the hologram device from the end of *TOTAL RECALL*, or that in a country where cigarettes are supposedly outlawed, Snake easily comes across a symbolic package of "Freedom" cigarettes. But to set off the film's electronic pulse basically means that Snake has destroyed all of civilization, condemning the inhabitants of Earth to a pretechnological existence that is nasty, brutish and short.

Frankly, I like the amusements this magazine is dedicated to, and enjoy the comforts civilization has to offer, even if it means putting up with dangerous psychos who have too much leisure time and too great an access to weaponry. I find the ending of *ESCAPE FROM L.A.* irresponsible and reckless in the extreme. Something to think about.

Dennis Fischer
Paramount, CA

MOREAU RECONSIDERED

Would Frederick Szebin care to disclose just what drugs he ingested prior to viewing *THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU*? That way, I can be sure to avoid ever taking a substance that will convince me a cinematic travesty is a classic!

After reading Szebin's review [28:6] of John Frankenheimer's distressingly inept and completely unnecessary updating of the H.G. Wells horror classic, I was almost convinced that Szebin saw some alternate cut of the film. He praises Val Kilmer's performance, which I found to be embarrassingly hokey and one-dimensional. Szebin also commends the effects work of Stan Winston, but I saw terribly obvious

CGI and inferior prosthetics work that were barely state-of-the-art compared to John Chambers' make-ups in the 1977 version of the story.

Yes, Fairuza Balk turned in a deft performance and Marlon Brando's Dr. Moreau was more of a misguided medico than sadistic scientist, but to say David Thewlis was in any way effective as the film's "hero" is absurd. Thewlis was little more than a whining, annoying simpleton who I kept praying would end up as critter chow before the finale.

Poor Ron Perlman was wasted in his Sayer of the Law role, and the supporting beast-men were undermined by laughably unconvincing makeup designs. I kept waiting for the Hyena-Swine's hump to open up and spill out all sorts of camping equipment.

Finally, for Szebin to declare this soon-to-be-forgotten (but never forgiven) celluloid compost superior to 1932's *THE ISLAND OF LOST SOULS* convinces me that this normally well-informed writer wasn't in control of his faculties while watching the movie. Please, Fred, enroll in a 12-step film critics program now, before it's too late!

Dan Cziraky
Newark, NJ

TREK KUDOS

Congratulations on another excellent, informative, and very readable issue of *CINEFANTASTIQUE* [28:4:5]. As for those who are sick of *STAR TREK* and think you focus on it too much: don't listen to 'em! I love the in-depth coverage on every aspect of making *TREK*: special effects, interviews with producers and actors, upcoming stuff...did I mention special effects?

At least one glaring error, though: in the *VOYAGER* article "Delta Q" you make a reference to the fourth season episode "Death Wish." Since there hasn't been a fourth season of *VOYAGER* yet, it makes me just a bit suspicious! Other than that, good job and keep it up!

Mark Smith
Holloman AFB, NM

[Make that third season!]

STAR TREK: A SOLOW EFFORT PART II

Regarding the "Letters" column, [28:4/5:126] there is a letter entitled "Star Trek—A Solow Effort." The first paragraph is very impressive. I guess I'll just say "Heil!"

Herb Solow and his wife Yvonne came to see me at my home in Pacific Grove, CA. He had sent me the book *Inside Star Trek—The Real Story*. I was stunned to find the incident on page 350, which is complete fiction and I brought it up in our first conversation. He says I came to see him with the drawings for a street to be built on the design lot and that I told him that Desilu wanted his input. He also says that I told him the street was to be built 3/4 the size of normal.

That is ridiculous and totally untrue. He made one bad mistake when he wrote that I said, "Well, in order to fit on that little park area across from the commissary..." He shouldn't have put those words in my mouth, because there was no park area across from the commissary. Not until we built the street and the park was part of the street. I used that street for a Bing Crosby production feature film called *BEN*. Matt Jefferies used that street at least twice for *LOVE, AMERICAN STYLE* after he left *STAR TREK*.

During the time I knew Herb Solow I liked him very much. Herb was a witty and charming man and good to be around. I'm sorry he has taken such a dislike to me. It didn't used to be that way.

Now I want to say a few words about Richard Datin who accuses me of saying, "Matt Jefferies spent more than four months building the model ship." I did not say that. I know that Sue Uram put that in her piece about *STAR TREK*, but she wasn't quoting me. Richard, I know you must be very good in your craft because Howard Anderson Co. wouldn't hire you unless you were very good. Give my regards to Darrell Anderson, a good friend of mine.

One more thing: I know very well how to spell "Jefferies," but if you will excuse me, I'll excuse you for not knowing how to spell mine.

Rolland "Bud" Brooks
Pacific Grove, CA

[As readers of our 30th Anniversary *TREK* issue (27:11/12) learned, Rolland "Bud" Brooks ran the Desilu art department when the series was in production.]

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continued from page 9

project. You can't worry about what somebody else is doing. It certainly had no effect on anything I was doing. It's the same book, and I'm sure somebody else will have a different point of view. You could place these characters and the way they're portrayed in almost any time. I tried to make them as real as anyone.

"To me," Anderson continued, "it was a most interesting and enjoyable experience to combine science fiction with character development, action-adventure, romance and all of the great elements of story-telling a master writer like Verne can give us. So few [writers] today seem to be able to give us [that] kind of experience."

COMING ATTRACTIONS

continued from page 59

Murphy and director Tom Shadyac are expected to reteam... And Billy Frolick is scripting the follow-up to *BEETLEJUICE*. Tim Burton will produce the long-overdue flick; it's not yet guaranteed that Michael Keaton will be lured back to play the party poltergeist.

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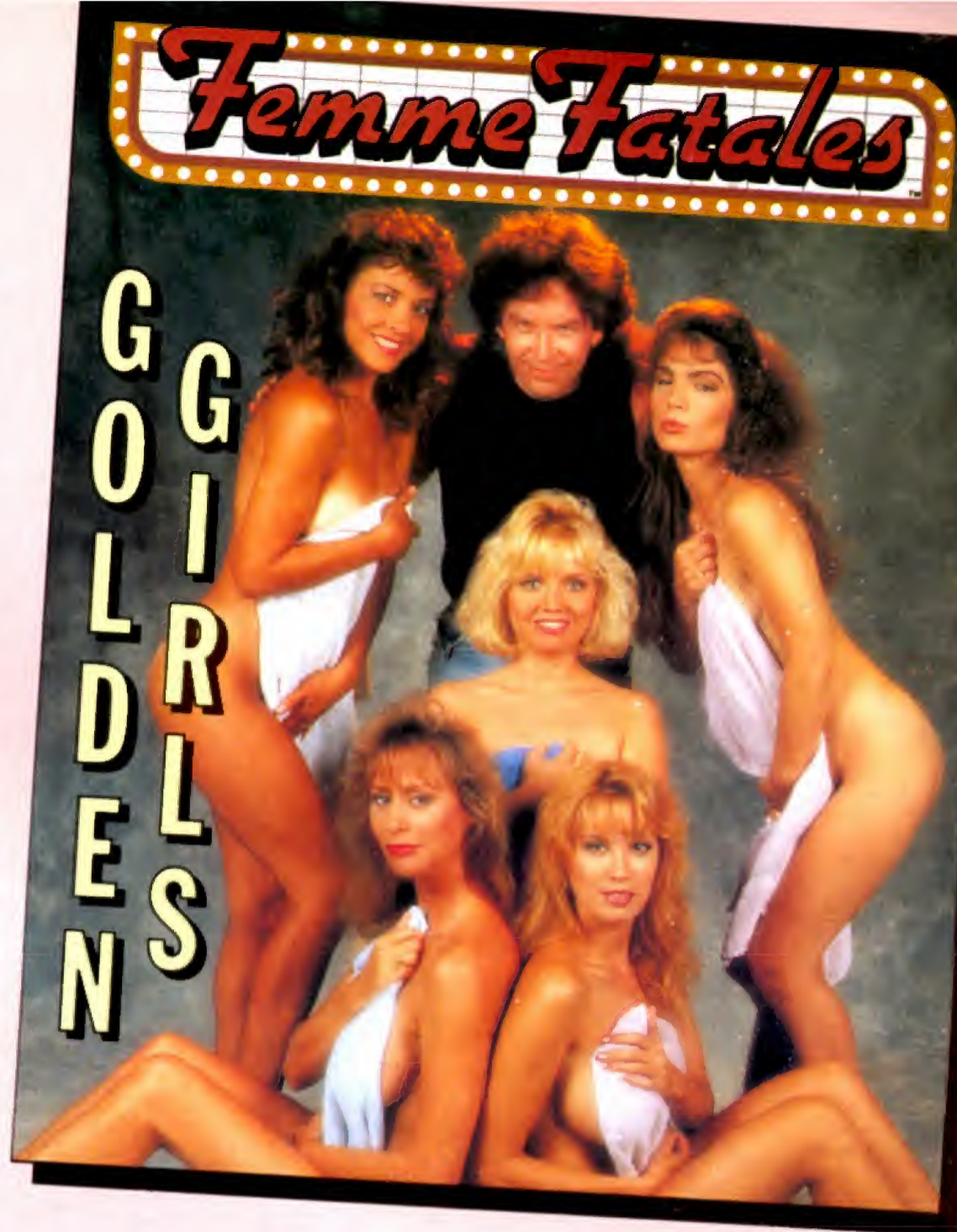
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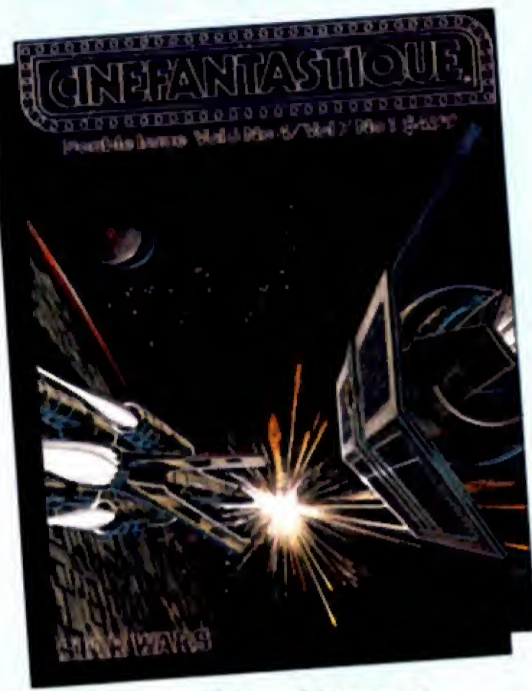


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